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A Woman of Sorek.

A NARRATIVE.

By

ANTHONY GOULD.

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TO

Walter Irving Bigelow.

"Quo non praestantior alter."

A WOMAN OF SOREK.

CHAPTER I.

No sound broke the soft summer silence, save the twitter of the birds, the wooing of the wind as it kissed the leaves and bent in loving embrace the tender little twigs, and the murmur of the kine lowing in the distant fields. The old Seminary on the brow of the hill, gray with the moss of years, slept in the radiance of the glowing sunshine, as if long since lulled into an eternal lethargy by the somniferous theology that had always been taught within its sacred walls. So, too, slumbered the little village in the valley below, as if fanned by the wings of the Angel of Death. The river stole through the meadows, rich with the changing hues of green and of gold, until it became a silver thread in the embroidery of nature's mantle. While around about the horizon, caressing the fleecy clouds, and nourishing their fleeting shadows, arose the wooded hills and the frowning Mountain, guardians of the vale and bulwarks against the sweeping and swelling waves of the world beyond.

A robin chirps noisily as if in indignant surprise; a squirrel dances along the wired fence and perches saucily upon a favoring bough, with its round glossy head held upon one side, and its bright twinkling eyes peering inquiringly, as a step resounds upon the smooth stone walk, and from the angle of the building slowly

moves a tall monastic figure; monastic in garb which is sombre and dismal, with long and flowing skirts; monastic in face which is pale and beardless and wan, as if through prayer and watching and fasting. A young man it is, though, for the step, while measured is firm and determined, and the stiff and coarse fabric of the dress fails to conceal the broad and commanding outlines of the form. There is a lurking fire in his eye, however calm its gaze may be, while his closely cropped hair curls tightly to his head, which is as classic in its mouldings as that of the young Antinous.

A certain undefined rigidity and awkwardness in his garb and carriage distinguished him, which betokened lack of contact with the world and absorbing self-consciousness. Then, too, there was an air of carefulness and of primness about him which seemed to be an identical and natural characteristic; and which was evidenced in his white tie of most orthodox fashion and precise fold, in his perfectly polished hat and gaiters, and in the absolutely dustless condition of his clothing. His appearance might denote the fortitude of a martyr; it would never indicate the abnegation of a hermit.

As he strode along with the dragging and monotonous regularity of an automaton, he was intently conning the pages of a book which he held widely spread open before him. It was a dainty little book, with rich levant binding, upon which was stamped a gilded cross, and he solicitously flecked away a particle of a decayed leaf that had fallen upon it. As he reached the broad expanse of the main approach, he paused and murmured:

"Oh, most rare and holy A'Kempis, may I, like thee, penetrate the veil and worship face to face with the Eternal! Oh, foolish mortals devoid of all understanding, who barter a heavenly crown for the tinselled bauble of the moment!"

He felt that he could look forth upon the world and see all mankind wallowing in wickedness, and plunging towards destruction ; that only within his own environment, within the old Seminary walls, could safety and a sure refuge be found ; and while he thought his lamentations to be sincere, they were far less intense than his comfortable sense and assurance that his own particular calling and election were sure. He clasped his precious volume within his folded hands, and his eyes rolled upwards towards the fathomless blue. An ecstasy seized him as with reverent tones and in rhapsody he exclaimed :

"Oh, blessed lot to commune with God, to dwell with his saints in holy unity of thought and purpose ! Keep me pure, O, Lord, and meet for thy sacred service !"

The skies lightened into transparency, the hills vanished in smoke and in mist, and his soul leapt beyond its terrestrial confines, and mingled with joys supernal and celestial. To him, life, which permeated every vein of his healthful young body and sparkled beneath the pallor of his cheek, which invigorated the air and attuned the birds, and brightened the verdure in the blaze of the fecund heat, was but a dismal dream that too long delayed a glorious awakening. And for the moment he believed it, or at least he thought that he believed it. But sincerity towards one's self is tested not by revery but by deeds. While fond imagination is decking him with the grace and purity and spirituality which Saint John found amid the crags and billows of Patmos, upon the shaded road in the rear of the Seminary, that furnished the most direct route from dormitories to boarding-houses, and whose gravelled walk was consequently well beaten by travel, as pretty a bit of *genre* as the longest summer day could afford, may be seen. Clad in dainty white, with here and there a

spark of scarlet as effective and as startling as the gleam of a flamingo's wing among the flaxen osiers, a young girl glides along, with step as light as that of Cytheria as she dances upon the foam of the sea.

The sun rays kiss her tenderly, not warmly; as Parian marble is kissed before it appreciates the love of Phœbus. The breeze toys with her golden tresses, almost flame-like in their brilliancy, and lingers within their silken coils, as might the fingers of a lover. She enters the park which surrounds the building and adorns the brow of the hill, and slowly passes down the walk of flags, regarding with a delight akin to passion the landscape outspread before her, and but disdainfully glancing towards the plain brick walls and the battered storm worn shutters. No dream of the ideal expands her soul. The horizon is her limitation. She revels in the warmth and light and joyousness of nature, and in the conviction that hers is life with all of its possibilities of youth, health, and beauty. The buoyancy of her spirits she does not analyze, for analysis would bewilder her mind and yield no compensating pleasure ; but like the lamb that gambols in the field, or the kitten that chases its shadow, she is conscious of it and that is sufficient.

Suddenly she stops, not as Diana would pause with hearing intent as the faintest Æolian breath wafts past her the suspicion of the baying of her hounds ; nor as the fawn would hesitate upon the brink of the precipice before venturing the leap that would elude the hunter ; but quickly, abruptly, violently, so violently as to nearly overcome her natural poise, so violently as to banish for the moment grace by awkwardness. Her face flushed and then paled, as glows and then dims the moon as it passes a break in the clouds, and she uttered a low exclamation of pain. Her foot had caught in the space between two of the flags which had unevenly spread apart, leaving a narrowing opening similar in

shape to the frog of a railroad track, and there remained fixed and immovable. Try as best she could, she could not extricate herself, so she finally desisted from further attempt, and fair as a nymph imprisoned by the sands, she stood motionless in quiet resignation.

"Perhaps this is a trap to protect the hapless theologians from any attack of the world, the flesh, and so forth, set by their masters bristling with the armor of age and of sanctity," she mused, as she merrily glanced towards the building. The flash of her sparkling blue eyes like the blaze from a deeper-hued heaven met the gaze of the young student. His frame trembled as from a shock. He recovered his consciousness and turned towards her. She gravely waved her parasol in signal of distress. A shade of annoyance darkened his face as he approached her. Were his holy reveries and righteous desires to be disturbed by that most frivolous and worldly of all worldly objects a woman? A creature repugnant to the most devout of the saints, marred by the original sin, and vouchsafed only doubtful honors through divine motherhood? The temptress, whose history from Eve to Delilah, and from Delilah to the daughter of Herodias teems with fatality to the soul? So he had thought as he had read his Chrysostom and nodded his convictions and assent during the long winter evenings in the comfortable seclusion of his room, before the logs that blazed in the recesses of his old-fashioned fireplace and lightened the shadows cast by his flickering lamp, and so thought he now. Yet so fair was the vision that stood before him and seemed to look down upon him notwithstanding his superior height; so calm and effulgent its gaze; so serene and virginal its face; so matchless in curve and willowy outline its form; that he sprang forward in confusion, his thoughts speeding away and hiding themselves in shame.

For Marcia Clenton's beauty was flower-like in its

immaculateness. She seemed to be the reflection of purity. Through her deep, steadfast eyes the light of God seemed to penetrate. Her face was that of the Christian martyr around whose brow already shines the glory of the Aureola. Her form was that of the dryad, lithe and sinuous and intoxicating in its perfection of rounding grace. "Sir" said she, and her voice thrilled the air like the tone of mellow chime wrought by cunning Spanish hand and ripened in mossy cloister. "I am a captive in a strange land. My feet have not fallen into pleasant places. May I crave your assistance?"

He knelt before her, he, whose knees had only penitence known, and the hand that held the sacred thoughts of A'Kempis, now encircled the little foot as he strove in vain to press it from its prison. A dainty little boot it was, well made and strong, as proudly arched as the neck of a Flemish charger, and set upon a heel as high and as stately as that which e'er adorned the outbent step of courtly dame in minuet.

"I fear that I cannot help you unless I unlace it," he hesitatingly said.

Confidingly and with all the composure of unconsciousness, she leant towards him and rested her hand upon his shoulder, like a queen conferring the accolade upon an humble champion. His fingers trembled and the nerves at the corners of his mouth jumped and twitched, as he awkwardly brushed the draperies aside and caught a glimpse of pale lilac clocks that on the sable web shone like twin stars.

The air seemed to grow dense with a faint, indescribably sweet perfume; and, as he held her foot unshod within the hollow of his palm, the warmth of her body seemed to pervade his being. For an instant, an irresistible impulse seized him to press it to his face, to his lips. Then the forces of long years of self-containment

and sobriety and obligatory routine asserted their power and mastery. Deep shame curtained his cheek. With downcast gaze, and with all the gentleness and delicacy of touch of a mother towards the infant whom she is adorning, he replaced the offending gear, laced it, and then, rising to his feet, bowed with the grave courtesy of an ecclesiastic who had heard and absolved the petty sins of a fashionable penitent.

But as he turned to enter the Seminary he noticed that she did not stir, he feared lest her foot might be badly strained and he thought that in her face he read a prayer for aid.

"May I not assist you?" he asked, extending his arm from which the ample sleeve of clerical black hung in stiff and angular folds. She placed her little hand upon it, and as it cuddled there like a bird at rest, for the first time he experienced a feeling of distaste towards his austere appearance. They slowly moved down the hill in the direction of the village, now and again pausing to allow her to rest.

"My name is Marcia Clenton," she began, "and I am visiting my aunt Mrs. Clenton, whose house you must know, she has so many of the Academy boys with her as boarders, and they are such fun. And you?"

"I am Jonas Chidsy, a poor student of theology. My life is that of a recluse. It is seldom that I speak with a lady, and I possess none of the elegancies of the world. I fear that you will find me uncouth and unfeeling to your needs." As he uttered his name, a suspicion of amused surprise broke the earnestness of her mien.

"Why, then, you know my cousin Naomi! I have so often heard her speak of you. If you could only realize all that she has said about you, you would not be so humble. But perhaps it is an air that you assume."

"It is most heartfelt I assure you. Your cousin has honored me with great kindness. She belongs to the village sewing-circle of Christian women, who appreciate the necessities of our student life, and who seek to alleviate them. In that way I have been her particular charge. Then, too, she encouraged me once when I was in danger of public failure through nervous dread, by her smile of friendly confidence, and I can never forget it. But our paths have been separate, and I remember her only as the pilgrim remembers the one who gave to him the cup of cold water, but who still climbs the heights of his lonely way."

"Oh, how I admire you self-devoted heroes!" she exclaimed, "and how your fidelity shames my fickle aimless life! What possibilities of soul culture stretch out before you, while we adorn the body and starve the spirit! Would that I could hide myself in some holy retreat and nurture my truer nature through prayer and contemplation! Oh, Mr. Chidsy, it is the limitations of this age, the iron restrictions of past ages, that bind me! I am fettered by prejudice and tradition, by the absurd distinctions of sex, by fashion and custom, yes, and by the usages of religion itself!" Her eyes moistened as they sought his in sympathy. A gentle color ebbed and flowed beneath her cheeks, like the blush of the east before dawn. As Jonas looked upon her, he recalled Milton's "Il Penseroso"—that divine maiden—and these lines that so fittingly harmonized with her:

> "With even step, and musing gait
> And looks commercing with the skies
> Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes."

Her words exhilarated him with the poison of flattery. His self-regard was strengthened by her evident respect and interest. He had always believed that his thoughts were striking, and that his vocabulary was

rich and expressive; and he had often bemoaned the lack of a listener. Now he possessed one, who charmed away embarrassment and enlisted courage. He rolled his words beneath his tongue with the utmost unction, his head assuming an argumentative poise and his finger emphasizing his earnestness. "It is my firm conviction, a conviction which my research into ecclesiastical lore has verified, that our church is not now the fostering mother, especially to your sex, that she was in the earlier days. Her care and watchfulness then were incessant. Her broad bosom ever afforded sacred shelter. Now she has dwarfed into a creature of incident. She lacks personality, and her appeals are both sentimental and rational, but not soulful. Even we churchmen are far too worldly. We should be a class set apart and consecrated, unknowing the sins and turmoils of earth save through the holy confessional. But no, we participate in every social pleasure, we marry, we market, we vote and become heated in political controversies, as though, instead of being servants of God, we were employés of an institution."

"Your belief then tends towards ritualism?"

"I believe that the old forms are the best. That holy men and martyrs did not live and die in vain. That every symbol has its incarnate and spiritual meaning and must not through ignorance be rejected. I believe that the soul is capable of growth, and that it is only through its cultivation that we can properly contemplate the majestic beauties of the one church of all ages."

His words seemed to deeply stir Marcia's emotional nature. Her hand tightened upon his arm, and he felt her form press closer to him. She raised her eyes and then lowered them as if in uncertainty, and her voice was low and broken by hesitation.

"Will you not help me to increase in spirituality?

May I not consider you my earthly mediator? You can benefit me so much, you are so wise and good and I am so weak and inexperienced. While I am here in Armway, be my adviser, my confessor, I am a motherless girl, giddy and impulsive, and I need you."

Jonas was swept by a flood of varying sensations. His vanity was stimulated, his confidence exalted. How he had ever misjudged and depreciated himself. Surely power and attraction must reside within, since he has been sought as "an earthly mediator"—how sublime the phrase—by a young and beautiful girl, whose zeal almost reached agitation. Pride in his holy calling, and in the distinction with which it had clothed him, inflated him. Then his thoughts as he had approached her recurred to him and confused him. Undoubtedly the holy fathers would never have included in their condemnation of all womankind, so fair, so ethereal, so perfect a being. Her place should be with St. Cecilia and St. Agnes, and he would be her canonizer. How tender and languishing had been her words "I need you." Could it be—no, he would not imagine it. He would do his duty. Before it all quibbles of sex and age must vanish. The true priest was epicene. His voice trembled as though the fingers of fate were tugging at his throat as he spoke :

"Most unworthy am I, a simple lowly student, to receive your confidences or to render you admonition. Life, even to me, though I labor and pray, seems a labyrinth, and the cord running through it oftens breaks and is with difficulty regained. Yet if in the darkness I am called to stretch forth my hand, I must do so."

"I love to walk upon the river bank towards Simpington. The waters ripple at your feet in friendly conversation. Some times a fish leaps upwards as if envying the sun, and decks the air with diamonds. While the drifting clouds in their reflection give expression to

the stream. Then, too, there are rustic seats and nooks upon the mossy banks, quite hid by the alders and the willows, the favored haunts of contemplation. There I will go with you when you will, for the restful quiet and calm beauty must adduce spiritual communion. And now I must say good-bye to you, until your duties can yield you to this new duty ; for, as you see, we have reached my destination. I thank you for your assistance and brotherly sympathy."

The little hand glided with electric thrills along his arm, lingered for an instant upon his wrist, and then surrendered to the eagerness of his grasp. Her eyes, tender with deep blue star-light, spoke a regretful farewell, and thus she left him.

As Jonas, perplexed yet most happy, retraced his steps, it seemed to him as though cycles of time had revolved and wheeled into chaos, since from the brow of the hill he had seen the heavens separate and disclose celestial glories. He realized that within himself a mighty change had been wrought. His life had gained a new interest, and had lost its exclusiveness. Its horizon had broadened. His selfishness had enlarged, and now embraced two personalities. He was conscious also that within him there was a conflict between duty and desire, each striving to control his meditations. ' How good, how pure she is," he thought. " How can I help her, for what help can she need? For the lily knows no blemish and the pearl no blight. Yet it comforts her loneliness to trust and confide, and most faithful shall she find me."

He had entered his room and was slowly pacing to and fro in the intentness of his reflection. The walls were lined with long cases filled to overflowing with books, whose uneven arrangement denoted the use of a student. It was a scholarly library, selected with discrimination, and expressed with infallibility its owner's

inclinations and prejudices. Thus, while the works of modern theologians and tractists were not absent, dusty tomes of black-letter, and time-molded leather bindings, and ponderous clasps, the sacred writings of Tertullian, and St. Chrysostom, and Eusebius, and Justine, and St. Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssia, those old fathers whose teachings had so thoroughly influenced his intellectual development, greatly prevailed. So, too, like a protecting genius, there was enshrined upon the case a bust of marble, mutilated by the blows of years, which had been brought to him by a friend from Rome, and was supposed to represent the head of St. Anthony.

His mental struggle continued and his thoughts refused to longer concentrate within the limits which duty had set. The memory of the warm hand upon his shoulder, the little foot within his palm, the dazzling clocks, the faint delicious perfume, and the intoxicating pressure of that dependent form triumphantly and irresistibly flashed across his mind. He glanced towards the effigy of the old monk, whose battered features seemed to indicate menace and warning.

"Alas!" he cried, "Has thy temptation, O Saint, revisited me?" Horror and shame and despair swept over his face like battalions rushing upon the plains to victory. He flung himself upon his knees and sought oblivion in prayer.

As Marcia entered her aunt's house, her step quickened and her lameness disappeared. The demure lines about her lips relaxed into a quiet smile of amusement. The table in the hall was piled with hats and coats, commingled with bats, rackets, balls and books. From the rear parlor where the boys were accustomed to gather before the pleasurable anticipations which hunger conjured were smothered by grim reality, loud laughter re-echoed. A fresh, clear voice, full of youth and merriment and strength, arose in the old song:

"I wish I had a barrel of rum,
Of sugar, three hundred pounds."

An unbidden flush deepened the glow of her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with delight. She tripped lightly through the hall, and joining in the refrain "A son of a Gambolier," danced into the room and disappeared beyond its portals

CHAPTER II.

When, a quarter of a century before the occurrence of those events which have been narrated in the preceding chapter, the father of Jonas Chidsy who had graduated from one of the most iron-bound seminaries that Puritan thrift had ever dedicated, had preached before a select committee of fathers in Israel, had won their grave commendations, and had received what he and they both termed a "call" to the one Congregational church of Stanfield, he found that venerable institution whose beams had been the first timber that the virgin forest had yielded to the white despoiler, in a sad state of sloth and apathy. The old white-haired clergyman, whose trembling hands had been upraised over the heads of father and son and grandson, had sunk into the calm that precedes eternal rest. His belief in old things had become intensified. He loved the old hymns, each one of which recalled to him a notable spiritual victory. He loved his old sermons. Their blots and thumb marks renewed within his recollection the painful labor of his sturdy manhood. He believed that he had hewn closely and well, and that the results of his care were still vital and forceful. So to the middle-aged and those who had journeyed at equal pace with him, service under his ministrations had become a communion with the past; delightful and restful to them, but to the younger generation, who desired all of the excitement that the narrow confines of their surroundings could produce, distasteful and devoid of all interest. Consequently, when the old pastor dozed away one evening in the comfortable arm chair in his study, and deep peace wrapped her

mantle of oblivion about him forever, there was a demand for a radical change in the policy and conduct of the church, and like all demands for the novel and different, it was omnipotent.

James Chidsy came to the village, a young man, tall and gaunt, with closely-shaven face deeply lined by meditation, great masses of shaggy black hair rolled aggressively above his broad bulging forehead, and dark eyes of strange power and earnestness ; eyes that penetrated all mannerisms and reserve, and deciphered the imprints of character upon the heart. They shone forth with that mysterious force which is given to some natures as a sixth sense and enables them to dominate over others. When he spoke he was heard. Sleep deserted the righteous whose Sabbatical slumbers had for years been unbroken and profound. The voice of the prophet was heard in the land, and its clarion notes rang attention in every ear. A realization of the awfulness of life, of its hopeless struggles and of the certainty of death settled like a pall upon the agitated villagers. "What must I do to be saved?" was the question that sought and demanded a sure answer. Shrieks of entreaty, storms of denunciations and anathema, luscious visions of the joys of a material paradise banished lethargy and aroused hope, and fear, and despair, and agony, and all the violent passions that sweep like cyclones through the hearts of men. Prayer-meetings, and watch-meetings, and special seasons, and preparatory lectures succeeded one another with such rapidity that their echoes almost commingled ; and the rafters of the church had no opportunity to settle into the inertia of the past. A revival had been, at the new pastor's coming, at once successfully inaugurated, and it devastated the normal calm of the parishioners as a conflagration would their property, or an epidemic their lives. Business was neglected, pleasure hid her smiles behind a veil of woe, while repentance and

lamentation a stout and trusty guard, daily marched a horde of captives to the altar.

As light-hearted, as joyous and as free as a wild flower in the forest glade, had ever been Alice Guendale. She was an only child, and her fame as an heiress had extended beyond the bounds of the stage route. Her life had enjoyed perpetual sunshine, never overcast by dismay or dread or care, which were words that denoted sensations unexperienced to her. She loved God as she loved her parents, simply, sincerely, naturally. A love that was capable of no analysis, that admitted of no distinctions, yet that had until now sufficed to surround her with perfect faith. At first she heard the preacher with commiserating wonder. Then his force bewildered and blinded her. She was fragile in constitution, lymphatic in tendencies, and his vitality overpowered her as might have a potent incense. The governing flash of his eye with its wilful magnetism, the sonorous roll of his voice, the vibration of his hand upheld in prophecy or malediction, fascinated her. Terror consumed her soul and haunted the weary nights which sleep had deserted. Upon all sides appeared pit-falls and shapeless darkness. The future alone flamed, but its light was that of destruction. All those upon whom she had depended seemed to be stricken with the palsy of panic. Alone in the dreadful turmoil, calm as demi-god, the new pastor remained self-contained with outstretched arms and broad protecting breast, offering safe refuge to the storm-driven sheep.

At length the tide turned, the waves though masterful crept no farther, and despite their dash and roar, its sullen retreat could be read upon the quivering sands. Passion is transitory; else reason would become its inevitable victim. The little village slept again after the storm, and exhaustion deepened its slumbers. The fields were gladdened by the toil of the husbandman,

the heavy-uddered cow yielded plenteously to the activity of the dairy, the quilting bees awakened gossip and the evening lounging at the store evoked mild dissipation. The fruition of that blessed season had transpired, and its results were manifest in a uniformly greater attendance at worship, and a longer roll of the faithful upon which the black mark of backsliding was already becoming apparent. Its influence upon the pastor's life however was permanently signified. Strange it was that he who had moved by the energies of his hidden power had been most affected. Yet a change in his environment had been wrought; for within the ugly brick walls of the parsonage now listlessly existed a quiet pallid wife, whose form was the form of Alice Guendale, but whose face was the inanimate face of her sister who had died many a year ago. And in the mighty vault of the one bank that furnished sufficient financial accommodation to a hundred miles of adjacent territory, that vault whose strength the rustics love to boast, shrewdly estimating it by the size of the key, in a capacious box whose shining lid clearly displayed the legend "James Chidsy," safely lay those securities which her father with loving care had accumulated for her comfort.

The house was dreary and dingy with rusty shutters, and walls against which the discouraged vines had long since decayed. No shade trees softened its nakedness. No flowers nor verdure relieved the barrenness of its approach. It remained an architectural horror upon the sweet rural landscape without mitigation or concealment. Within could be found those necessaries of life that rigid economy makes manifest, but comfort furnished no auxiliary. While there was no want, it seemed as though its presence had not long since departed, and as though its shadow still remained. These were days when samplers were artistic, and antimacassers denoted culture; but no such superfluities of naughtiness distracted

the thoughts and inflated the pride within this home of devotion. The walls were as bare as they were when the plasterers finished them. Upon the hard polished floor each foot-fall rang the challenge of "who goes there?" The chairs were as upright as their owner, and the beds were penitential in their influences. An air of rigidity characterized all things, as inflexible as the face and the spirit of the good man whose righteousness is determined and unchanging.

It was here that Jonas was born and reared, an only child, amid these concomitants of sadness and repression. His father must not be hardly judged. He lived, as he was wont to say, "according to his lights." He owed no man, and painfully performed each duty. His nature was affectionate; but this attribute inspired him with shame and its subjection produced harshness. He loved his wife; but the light of his love burned very low. Once when he had a fever and delirium had conquered his self-enclosed spirit, his ravings had colored her cheeks and softened her eyes with tenderness. He did not appreciate that he had wooed her through fright and fascination, and that after he had won her, he had coiled about her the deadly folds of his bigotry, until her happy girlish heart had been crushed into pulp. To him it seemed that she was blessed above all women; and that her silent, patient, monotonous life was the discipline necessary to ensure eternal glory. Such had been his mother's existence, and he well remembered the serenity of her death-bed.

When Jonas as a child realized his own identity, he was sorry for himself. His earliest recollections embodied blows and tears. His first subjective thought regretted animation. It was so cruel, so unnecessary. A dreamless sleep without an awakening possessed no terrors for him, and oblivion seemed to be as griefless as was the day before his birth.

His father believed in the incessant activity of a personal devil, and that idleness was the most insidious snare with which he entrapped his victims. So Jonas was never idle. He attended school, and when its session was over, he worked steadily, continuously, performing all of those hard coarse labors with which a farm can tax the strength of youth, until the evening prayers were said and a stern, cold "good-night" dismissed him to his cot in the attic. Upon Sundays, or the "Sabbath" as his father always said, he attended the meetings and consumed the hours between them by reading the Old Testament, Baxter's "Saints' Rest," and "Macolm on the Atonement." His sole knowledge of fiction was derived from Solomon's Song, the Book of Revelation, and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." These stirred strange thoughts that burned within him and vivified the gloom of his little room with weird creations. Yet these visions were soon buried in the dun routine of his life. Machinery is never inspired, for its monotonous regularity kills imagination. Deep within the boy's soul lay the warm emotions which his gentle mother had imparted unto him, concealed by the ashes of suppression, yet vital to his nature.

Jonas was renowned throughout the neighborhood as a good boy. Unlike the parson's son of tradition, he was neither an awful example nor a vicarious sacrifice to his mates. He was rather, the suggested object of their emulation, and consequently the recipient of their unalloyed detestation. He was always so respectful, so obedient, so faithful to his studies, so quiet and so docile, that of course his fellows hated him. And yet, one day after school hours, when the ordinary amusements of pulling his hair, soiling his clothes with mud and mutilating his books, had been supplemented by the applied epithets of "girl," "saint," and "sissy"; he had turned upon the largest of his tormentors with the

ungovernable ferocity of a savage, had quickly stretched him upon the ground, bleeding and senseless, and then had leapt upon his inert body and had so pummelled his countenance that for days afterwards darkness and blueness preyed upon the damask of his cheeks. And when he ran to his home and hid himself within his room, with doors securely bolted, he so frightened his mother by his fierce lamentations and threats of self-destruction should his conduct ever be mentioned within his hearing, that she dared to approach her sombre lord and to address him in such unaccustomed accents, that she overcame the complaints of terrified school-boys and astounded parents, and deep and awful silence banished the expected rod. After this, Jonas became even more reserved and taciturn. He had changed ridicule into fear, and now his companions avoided him. He often longed for their torture; for it was preferable to the solitude to which he had been doomed. It thus occurred that during the years—and they are few indeed—when friendship possesses virility, and is not tainted by insincerity and selfishness, and when sacrifice and generosity are potentialities that may become facts, Jonas knew no friend. No boyish heart beat in unison with his sympathy, no vigorous right arm was ever ready to be nerved for his protection.

When Jonas was a little lad he sat, one Sunday afternoon, upon the porch in the rear of his father's house. His book was open upon his knees but he was not reading it. He was listening to the song of the birds that were nesting in a tree near by.

"Why are you so contemplative, my son?" asked his father, who had quietly approached him. The boy started, as though guilty of a discovered sin; yet he bravely replied: "I was wondering why I should not be as happy as the birds. The same sunlight greets me; for me, too, the flowers bloom and the trees put forth

their shady leaves, and all nature seems to smile and caress. Why is it that they are so gladsome, while I am dull and burdened with dread, and must read books that I do not like and hear sermons that I do not understand?"

"Because, my son, of sin and of the grave. These poor senseless creatures are children of the hour, while we are heirs of eternity. Short, indeed, is the longest probation vouchsafed to man to enable him to so live as to avoid the dire consequences of original sin."

"Oh how I wish that I were a bird!" Jonas impulsively cried, and was straightway condemned by his horrified father to continue his reflections within the seclusion of his attic chamber.

So constantly instilled within his mind, was the wickedness of enjoyment and the need of incessant prayer and watchfulness. While he could not understand the purpose, he fully appreciated the necessity; and thus he became punctilious in the performance of all religious obligations. But each day he grew more sullen and dejected. Two natures contended within him for mastery, the one, warm, impulsive and sensitive; the other, cold, secretive and intuitively deceitful. These were the maternal and paternal forces, and they did not coalesce, but existed independent and identical within him, though circumstances and environments encouraged the growth of the latter.

When Jonas had reached the age of sixteen years, his father died, a peaceful death, so the old and experienced said, speaking, as they judged, relatively. But to Jonas it was a most fearful and grewsome sight. To him the scene was an unmitigated horror, and the stertorous breathing rang in his ears, and the ghastly vision, that in one prolonged moment became a thing unearthly and uncanny, preyed upon his eyes and haunted his bedside for many sleepless nights. So this was the fate that

awaited mankind. He felt like a captive upon a South Sea isle, who for the first time realizes that he is a victim reserved for sure immolation upon the altar. Life then was a cheerless tragedy, the curtain falling upon the fatal punishment of all the actors. Why did men write and exaggerate the agony of an impending doom, when an equal fate visited them all? The struggle might be protracted, but the same end was inevitable. The old regret of his boyhood, intensified now by a complete knowledge of animalism which had hitherto been shrouded by the imagery of sacred song, returned to him. How unnecessary it all was. If he had sought existence he could only blame himself for what seemed to be its results. But he had not. He found himself, against his will, endowed with a life which he believed to be interminable; and the thought that even death would afford no rest, but might usher scenes far more terrible than imagination could picture, nearly distracted him. Perhaps he would have surrendered to the insane motives that arose within him had he conceived that they would be lasting. But his teachings, in which he believed although he dreaded so to do, taught him that on the threshold of another world full consciousness would return to him. So it would be of no avail. Notwithstanding his pious instructions, death formerly had possessed no personality to him. It had merely been an indefinite concomitant of senility and decay. Now it was a demon of supernatural power who was incessantly upon his track. He shuddered beneath the cold touch of its fleshless finger and the menacing glitter of its orbless eye.

His mother's nature aroused within him, and imagination and reason, like twin evil spirits, nearly rent him apart in their contest for supremacy. It had been his father's wish that he should prepare himself for the ministry. For not one instant did he dream of gainsaying

it; but with all the fervor of a dervish did he undertake the task. With a zeal that was pitiable in its directness and concentration did he pore over the old tomes that he had conned, and endeavor to think the thoughts that had controlled him and gain the assurance that he had assumed.

Boundless as had been the subjection of his mother's spirit during his father's lifetime, the astounding shock of his demise had rendered more permanent its thraldom. For now her mental force exhausted itself in fancying him to have been all that he was not, in decking a character devoid of kindliness with gentle graces, and in transforming a false but noble image into a perfect likeness. So no change transpired in the tone of the house, it was even more colorless than ever.

The widow draped with weeds and sorrow, and her tall, athletic, lugubrious son, as regularly as the Sabbath dawn, were seen within the family pew and then were invisible for the remainder of the week. They were as secluded as is a hermit in a rocky cave, who visits the busy marts when duty or necessity demands, and then vanishes into forgetfulness.

This unvaried existence finally conquered his sensibilities. They became subdued and dulled. Extreme fear left him, because he was no longer capable of such an emotion. He grew contented and satisfied, and he attributed this change to his devotional endeavors. His mind was so warped by its constant exposure to the dismal mists of solitude that its normal faculties of judgment were diseased. He consumed a large proportion of each day in introspection; yet he knew himself not. He believed that his life was pure and godly; it was regular and free from temptation. He believed that religion had permeated and become a part of his entire being; it was simply his father's cloak which he had assumed with his other possessions. He believed that

he loved God; he feared Him. He believed that his nature was guileless and passionless; it was an unploughed field. The terrors evoked by his father's decease gradually diminished, and, in their stead, he experienced a certain relief that he was now able to will for himself, not appreciating that even in the grave the paternal influence was most virile.

It so happened that business connected with the management of his estate caused Jonas to visit the city of Boston. No recluse ever returned from his desert cell so unsophisticated as he. The glory of the sun-lit dome of the old State House cast its radiance upon him. The imagery of familiar hymns seemed to be realized. He walked the streets upon the tip-toe of wonder and of awe. Surely Heaven could not be more fair. One morning he passed the gray stone walls of a Roman church. Through the high, half-swung, ecclesiastical windows, a dream of celestial harmony was stealing. He faltered for a moment and then entered the widely arched portals, and screened himself from observation in an unoccupied pew behind the massiveness of a fluted column. A Requiem Mass was in process of celebration. He had never before heard the tones of an organ, a tuning fork and a pair of muscular lungs supplying its place within his accustomed sanctuary. Never before had he seen stained glass, nor the marvels that architecture can work from stone. The varied hues of the dim and holy light, the sacred symbols and effigies royal in gold and in purple, the chaste glimmer of the candles, like disembodied souls supplicating in unison, the oppressive and oriental effect of the incense, the long line of priests and acolytes, the clash of the mysterious chime as the worshippers prostrated themselves in adoration, and the music, that seemed to be evolved from the divine homage of the spheres and celestial bodies, ravished his senses and entranced him. Gone was all remembrance

of the homely little meeting-house, with its huge sounding board, its stiff, uncouth, benches and pews, the wearisome windings and repetitions of its prayers, and the seven long stages of its sermons.

Jonas entered that church a Puritan. He left it a Puritan transformed, with imagination aroused and sense of the beautiful awakened. Many times after this did he return, with all the fervor of a lover seeking his mistress, scarcely realizing the strength of his interest, nor attempting to interpret the sources of his emotion. The maternal quality within him, for so long a time pinched and starved, had at length found ambrosial food, and its craving claimed satisfaction. Yet Jonas had no intention of becoming a proselyte of the Romish faith. He inhaled its forms and ceremonies as one might the aroma of a delicious wine; but he succumbed not wholly to its persuasions. This was not devoutness, it was dissipation, that caused him to tremble as he thought of its glamour, when alone in his little room at home surrounded by the grim and forbidding associations and mementoes of his father.

Still it is possible that some order of friars gray might have included him within its silent circle, had not doctrine stood like a lion in the way. For doctrine was as firmly set within his mind as were the bones within his members. He thoroughly understood the tenets of his belief, and was versed in all of its controversial literature. And this stout armor was not to be pierced by music and lights and incense however sensuously delightful they might be. Besides his intellect revolted from the idea of the adoration of the Virgin. To him, she was no more blessed than the dust of the manger within which the Christ had been laid. While her sex was the epitome of submission and inferiority. He had no womanly ideal; for he never thought of woman. His mother had been his sole female companion. He

appreciated that she had ever lavished upon him love and tenderness. But this had seemed to him to be her duty, a part of her life's obligation, as it was to each morning have prepared a suitable breakfast for him, and it had never elicited from him a responsive touch of gratitude. He knew that she shrank before his father, that she feared him, that she endeavored to divine and meet his very wish, that she was as humble as a servant and as silent as a slave; and it had ever seemed right and fitting to him that this should be so. His indignation had never burned because of her treatment, it had been condensed upon his own ill usage. Not one spark of chivalry lingered upon the bleak hearth-stone of his soul and kindled into anger through the knowledge of her blighted joys. For he had never thought that she might have been happier than she was. Her patient resignation that should have caused him to love her more, simply made him respect her less. In the mirror of nature his character was reflected in repulsive lines.

As for the young girls of the village, they shunned him with reverent awe, for he was to be his father's successor.

Romanism, however, had strongly affected him. It changed the course of his reading and aroused his æsthetic tastes. He perused the poetry of meditation and was lulled by the soothing of its rhythms. He learned to love paintings and to commune more closely with nature, and to join in the praise with which her voice is attuned.

When as a boy he had striven to coalesce the restless forces of his character with the future that had been drafted for him, he had said that he would be a missionary; and the anticipations of bloody struggle with savages had far exceeded in interest his hopes of spiritual achievements. Then he had acceded to his parents

desires, and to the pious hopes of the elders of the congregation, and had planned to eventually occupy his father's pulpit. But now he rebelled against this destination. He longed to erase all the hard, bitter lines from his life. He yearned for richer food, for a more luxurious retreat.

His mother died and he was left alone without one tie of consanguinity or friendship. He was wealthy; but he disdained his fortune, and was ignorant of its power. The pleasures of the world stretched forth their arms and sought his embrace, and he craved the quiet of absolute seclusion. He was free, and anxious to be bound. Life was bitter; yet he thought that in mild meditation and in the cultivation of the soul and of his newly-discovered æsthetic taste, he could best endure it. He compromised between the influences of his youth and the tendencies of his manhood, and entered the Seminary at Armway which was under the rules and guidance of the Protestant Episcopal church. Here he enjoyed that irresponsible rest into which selfishness entered ruling as a supreme quality. He was filled with vain imaginings which inflated his pride. He indulged in rhapsodies whose insincerities he did not appreciate. And through constant submission to vague whims and to the dreams of idleness, he had reduced his moral nature, whose strength had always been its freedom from attack, into a condition of extreme weakness, none the less real because he did not justly estimate it, when, as has been seen, he met Marcia Clenton.

CHAPTER III.

It was when Jonas was about five years of age, and the clouds of knowledge were just commencing to drift across his mental horizon, that in the village of Mayville, which was nearly one hundred miles distant from his home, throughout the lingering hours of one summer day, there was great popular excitement. Ruth Connyng, "the acknowledged beauty of this vicinity," as she had been frequently termed in the local press, was missing from her father's house. Her parents were distraught with anxiety, and grief promised rewards for the slightest clue or information, which, it is possible, reason would have afterwards repudiated. Rumors of foul play prevailed, and scouting parties were organized. Men talked in low, determined tones, with darksome and threatening fire in their eyes, as men always do on such occasions, under the twofold stimulus of an unusual cessation from toil, and of that peculiar form of courage whose origin is attributed to the conquerors of Holland. But when it was discovered that Charlie Clenton, the dashing young lawyer, had also disappeared, the brave bands quietly dispersed and the crowds around the tavern bar rolled a sweet morsel of savory scandal beneath their tongues.

"The ole' Squire 'll never forgive her," squeaked an octogenarian, as with trembling avidity, he bespattered his venerable beard with the greater portion of his dram.

"Wait'n see," mumbled another, as he impeded articulation with an enormous handful of tobacco, "blood's thicker'n water, an' she's the apple of his eye.

Hazy rejoinder and rambling reminiscences followed in quick succession. The lineal and collateral branches of the Connyng family tree were thoroughly shaken. Traits of ancestors, long since changed into mould, were resurrected, and "I tole yer so," was a frequent ejaculation.

The revolving months with unceasing speed propelled the train of the seasons, and still naught was seen of the "apple of his eye." She was in Europe spending golden days of happiness with the man whom she loved, and whose strong heart throbbed in responsive harmony, realizing the perfect joy that only the thoughtless confidence of a young, inexperienced, giddy girl can attain. But as the far-away future changed into the retreating past, the prophecy of the village gossip was fulfilled; the old squire did relent. The wanderers returned, and great were the rejoicings that attended the slaying of the fatted calf. None danced at this reunion with so careless and so light a foot as did Ruth. How happy she was as a daughter, as a wife, as a mother. For, amid the admiring guests, beamed the golden locks of a little child, marvellously matured and developed for her age, whose name was Marcia.

That night the future seemed to be cloudless; yet the mists were already gathering. The new home was prepared with the provident comfort that luxury can confer upon intelligent endeavor, and blessings seemed to attend the lighting of its focal fires. Yet inexorable death had marked its lintel with envious touch; and hopes and dreams and joyous anticipations shrivelled like chaff in a fervent heat. Life's pleasures are limited, and when they concentrate they become most fleeting. Maniacs beat their witless heads against padded walls; criminals counted the dragging hours of hopeless imprisonment; the maimed and the sick grudged each painful breath; yet still they all lived, and death heeded

not their cries. But the golden cord that bound the blithesome spirit of the young wife to earth in willing captivity, was ruthlessly broken; and the little child, playing in the sunshine in the unconscious gladness of healthful infancy, in the loss of her mother was doubly orphaned. For in that fatal hour, her father had matured into grim manhood. His eyes had lost their lustre, his cheeks their youthful flush, and the ringing laughter died from his voice forever. He became a self-abstracted entity, a ceaseless piece of machinery. His profession engrossed his attention: and unremitting toil won him celebrity as a lawyer, and kept memory under the severest restraint. He wooed sleep with weariness, and vanquished grief by activity; warding off her keen shafts with the shield of labor.

So Marcia was consigned to the care of servants, who nurtured her as tenderly as are the flowers of the green house. Flowers, it is true, have no souls, and their culture is entirely material; yet they are always fresh, sweet and beautiful. Their care in this respect was similar, and the same results followed. They gratified every wish that she expressed since her contentment was their advantage. When she cried for the moon they gave it to her, or at least she thought that they did; and the production of a gaudy lantern was a much pleasanter way for them to surmount this difficulty, than, through explaining its inaccessibility, to endure her fretful complainings.

Marcia was never a boisterous child. She was quiet, secretive and retentive. She was indulged to so great an extent that her determination rarely displayed its strength; when it did, it was unscrupulous and unyielding. When she was thwarted, she apparently forgot it, but she never did. In time she always worked her revenge; and no meanness was so petty as to shame her from employing its instrumentality. She was never

contrite; for her desires were her conscience. A keen observer, who was not dazzled by the ethereal loveliness of her face, would have noticed that her eyes were almond shaped, that her mouth was curved in downward lines at its corners, and that when she smiled, she smiled only with her lips.

She frequently adopted a quaint and effective tone of compassion towards herself, which she assumed, as she did her most costly garments, when guests were expected. Experience had taught her that sympathy excites interest, and that a poor little motherless girl is certain to be loved and petted. So such she became, when the occasion was propitious. The grief, that piteously bedewed her saddened gaze when consoling sweet-meats seemed to be a possibility, was heart-rending; yet she afterwards found them to be most assuaging.

Marcia had always feared her father, and in his presence was silent and respectful, and obedient to the glance of his cold gray eye. She never troubled nor disturbed him, and therefore he considered her to be the model of excellence. This idea became fixed in his mind with all the inflexibility of a legal maxim. So servants and governesses came and went, and he heeded the praise of their coming and disdained the warning of their departure. And this little child grew up within his household, more absolute in authority and inclination than ever was princess within a royal harem.

Her father possessed the library of a desultory, omnivorous reader rather than that of a scholar. The bent of his taste had been changeful, and he had followed the course that it had indicated. An abundant collection of books was the result of this literary extravagance; and, though it had been chosen without practiced discrimination, his natural culture had instinctively sought the fairest fruit. While the bibliophile

would have there met much to condemn and little to laud or to covet, the student of rhetoric and of polite literature would have revelled in its exhaustless richness. The room was capacious and tempting, viewing the garden, through its deep bay-windows, with its closely cropped lawn, and fountain freshening the flowers with the dew of its dancing waters. The gloom of its deep recesses and the sunshine that streamed through the meshes of the vine clinging without in curious festoons of living green, blended into an atmosphere deliciously soft and mellow. While the broad, low divans invited that dreamy perusing which intoxicates the mind and enervates the will.

When Marcia was a young maiden, this became her favorite haunt; and on any glowing afternoon she might have been seen curled up upon the cushions deeply intent in reading, or with book open upon her lap and eyes upraised in fantasy, buried in profound reverie. It delighted her father when he returned in the evening to find her thus absorbed in Hume's "History of England," Milton's "Paradise Lost" or "Thompson's Seasons." He would engage her in conversation and question her narrowly as to her views of those authors who had been most sympathetic and compatible with him; and in her frank criticisms and phenomenal erudition, he discovered the vainglorious pride of a parent. He would boast among his lawyer-friends of her attainments and tendencies, and from her case conclusively prove, at least to his own satisfaction, that a fine literary taste and love of learning can be inherited. But he never thought of looking beneath the divan's pillow upon which she nestled; or he might have found there concealed, "The Sentimental Journey" or "Tom Jones," or "Perigrine Pickle," or the fascinating works of Mrs. Aphra Behn, or even his old forgotten copy of the poems of Lord Rochester. But this last

revelation could have only transpired upon a certain day when he was surely absent from the village, when the governess was bound hand and foot by sickness, and when no interloper could have possibly approached. And even then its naughty pages had been read, if indeed they were read, with great fear and trembling, and frequent starts and furtive concealments.

Marcia always possessed certain undefined powers of attraction and fascination, which, without apparent intention, she exerted upon all of her opposite sex with whom she was thrown into association. They were born within her and were as natural and intuitive as is its daily revolution to the helianthus. When she was a tiny baby, her father's friends delighted to hold her upon their knees and to kiss her, she was so contented and she cooed into their faces so engagingly. When she was older and played upon the lawn near the roadside, the passers-by would involuntarily pause and gaze upon her and strive to win her into conversation. Nor was this a difficult task. While appearing to be shy, she was forward and observing. Boundless love of admiration governed her, and since her wishes had never been curbed, success invested her with a bewitching audacity. Her keen perceptions and restless eye grasped every characteristic and peculiarity and minutiæ of dress, appearance and carriage, that betokened thought or occupation; and her pat questions and suggestions aroused curiosity and amazement.

And the boys of the village? They were her slaves. As the years rolled by, each one touching her with beauty's magic, her home became a Mecca to which a daily pilgrimage was a pious obligation. She ruled them with the sceptre of her sex, now causing them to blush with shame over their rough cotton clothing and coarse boots; now inciting jealousies between them from which many a bloody poll emerged; now scorn-

ful, and now lavish with her caresses; she thus bewildered and bound them by the intricacies of her coquetry. Sometimes she would romp, withal she was so demure, but that would be when she was with one alone, nor would its remembrance be lasting with her. The next day the placid eyes would be more shyly cast down than ever before, and meek seriousness would chide rude endeavor.

But she wearied of them all, and despised the poor conquests of her meagre vicinage. She longed for a knight with nodding plume; for a cavalier, with flashing glance and twisted mustachios, with dangling rapier, and burnished gorget and golden chain. She was an accomplished and enthusiastic equestrienne, and fond of long solitary rides through the wild and romantic scenes of the neighborhood; and, often when dashing along the narrow path that penetrated a woody glade, she would imagine that he was seeking for her and was following her, and she could almost hear the pantings of his courser as he plunged in fiery pursuit, and feel the hot breath of her gallant fanning her cheek as he bent low in obeisance at her side. She dreamed of courts and of revelry, of the sparkle of gems and of dark eyes, of the gleam of white hands and the sheen of rare laces, of soft whisperings behind arras of gorgeous tapestry, of mysterious foot-falls at night, and of sweet alarmings and distress. The circumscription of her life jaded her. Welcome the state of the minuet, or the dash of the farandole; either would be preferable to the torpid stroll in the rustic lane!

Whenever Marcia attended the social gatherings that thawed the stupor with which the bitter winter enthralled the village, she was surrounded by a bevy of young girls who encircled her with their admiration, and with the flattery of their imitation. She did not interfere with any of their love-makings nor demean herself into rivalry

with them. So their praise exceeded speech. But the young matrons did not zealously join in these anthems to her angelic simplicity, for they saw their recreant swains, despite nods and winks and warnings, press eagerly forward in their anxiety to render homage at her shrine. Yet they did not dare to accuse her of encouragement, for as often happens in treasonable affairs, they lacked the knowledge of an overt act.

There was at least one trait of Marcia's, which was incompatible with her seraphic nature, and that was the ability and desire to eat a variety of indigestible substances. In early youth this manifested itself in a craving for chalk and slate pencils, which, as maturity approached, extended so as to include pickles and hard-boiled eggs and all forms of chocolate confection. The habit was secretive and self-restricted. To her father she seemed to be as fastidious as the humming birds that subsist upon the air and the sunshine. With alarm he watched her refuse the most tempting viands that his table proffered. He thought that she appeared wan and debilitated; and in his agitation he consulted not only the old family physician, but also a famous specialist from Boston, who looked grave and wise, and hemmed and pursed his lips, and feared a predisposition towards several maladies, and who left behind him, besides a brief recapitulation of the value of his services, sufficient iron and bismuth and phosphorus to minerally enrich the soil of the garden into which they were thrown. But Marcia was not suffering from anæmia. The larder often endured nocturnal attacks which were the subject of endless speculation to the cook, and of unjust suspicion towards the maid. While snuggling in the cosiest nook of her capacious easy-chair, within the closed portals of her room surrounded by enticing fragments of edibles, and by her choicest books, in a negligée costume which she had designed solely for comfort, but which was charming with-

out any design, Marcia nourished both body and mind upon peculiar food after her own peculiar fashion. She loved the unusual, the extraordinary, the bizarre, and her participation in it was most felicitous if it only remained secret.

There was an old maiden aunt who had anchored her dilapidated, storm-driven bark within the haven of this home, whose affection for Marcia was as short-sighted as were her eyes, and they required the strongest lens to successfully thread a needle. She believed that her niece was most devoted to her, and was constantly striving in some way to benefit and to relieve her. Every stroke of work that she did about the house, and she was both grateful and willing, she believed was done despite Marcia's protestations, and against her wishes. It almost made her feel guilty as she thought of the grieved surprise which would shine from those tender blue eyes when her disobedience was made evident. Yet she continued to be busy from morning until night, and the gentle reproaches which were so soothing to her, did not lighten her labors. And Marcia had more opportunities than ever before to ride and to read and to dream. While her aunt, oppressed by a vague sense of her own ingratitude, cudgelled her poor old brain, and bent her weary back in striving to repay by slight attentions the kindnesses which her angel niece showered upon her.

One winter, Marcia did so tire of her governess that she attended the village school. There, of course, she stood at the head of her class, while ever second to her was Tom Graham, who had hitherto been considered invincible and whose learning had been quite the boast of the district. It was whispered, at one time among a few disgruntled pupils, that he had been heard prompting her; and that their exercises in Algebra and History were often almost identical. But Marcia had too many

friends for these rumors to prevail. She was so sweet and so good, if she and Tom agreed in their work it was because they were both so clever, and they both were right. Accordingly the foul reports were forgotten, save to be quoted as instances of how no one is beyond the reach of slander; and Marcia became a village Hypatia in learning, as she had ever been in beauty and in excellence. Thus virtue was its own reward, and education was proven to greatly prosper under the stimulus of kisses.

When Marcia had reached that age which is considered to be intrinsically sweet by all, except those who have passed it, it occurred to her father, who had been consulting again with the family physician, and who was still alarmed over her fragility, that a course at a famous boarding school of which he had some knowledge, might strengthen her constitution and offer a broader and more commensurate field to her budding intellectuality. So one bright autumn morning she was driven away amid the shouts and the sobs of her companions, who had all crowded to bid her God speed, save one who, alone in the woody nook where they had met morning after morning, and she had become so quickly proficient and he had been so sweetly recompensed, wept and tore his sandy hair, and wondered whether she was thinking of him and whether she too was weeping, and comforted himself with this belief, because she was so good and had so often told him how fond she was of him, and had proved it too, he thought, as the hot blood flushed his cheek. So he cheered himself from day to day; and dreamt of Paul and Virginia, and of Ulysses and Penelope; and built famous castles, which belonged to him and were guarded by his retainers, and in each one of which sat Marcia with her eyes beaming confidence and her smile speaking trust, surrounded by her maids and busied with the tapestry web, patiently awaiting his return.

While Marcia was borne away towards her destination, her mind, clear and free from remembrance and regret of home and friends, as fresh and ready for new impressions as is a renewed photographic plate.

"I am so comfortable," she had softly replied to the inquiries of her fellow-passenger, a sympathetic old gentleman, who had noticed with emotion the grief that had attended her departure, and who maundered on in a rambling stream of platitudes regarding the responsibility of parents, and how no one could feel the feelings of a father, unless he was a father, in such a delightfully interesting manner, that he finally fell asleep over it, and proved himself to be a bachelor impostor by the aggressive way in which he snored. And comfortable, assuredly, she felt. She knew that she was beautiful, and dressed richly and in taste. She occupied the softest corner of the coach, where the blazing sunlight could not burn her, and where she coiled herself snugly and engagingly. Within her satchel was a package of her favorite chocolate beans. And she had such a novel, such a desperate, maddening, enthralling novel, which, with an eye single to propriety, she had carefully rebound with the cover of "Cœlebs" by the spotless and trustworthy Miss More, whose writings had been especially recommended by her father. Besides, she had more money in her purse than she had ever before possessed, and how potently that fact tranquillizes the spirit, as the reading of the will assuages the grief of the heir. Comfortable, of course, she was and always would be. Let others be absurdly sad and jealous, and nervous and despondent, she was so good and so sweet that naught could disturb the pleasures of her existence. Grimalkin dozes in selfish enjoyment upon the hearth, though death and disaster visit the house, and she is sleek and long-lived.

Marcia was not absorbed within the multitude of

girls with whom she was now associated. Her flexible disposition and her love of admiration, which was restless and exigent, soon gave to her pre-eminence. Towards her teachers she was respectful and flatteringly deferential, winning their approbation by her industry, and their affection by her gentle manner and timid yet tender caresses. Upon the scholars she lavished the wealth of her versatility. She sympathized with the home-sick. She wept with the motherless and sadly recounted her own irreparable loss. She prayed with the godly, and her pious thoughts were clothed in a vocabulary that was rich and sumptuous. She mastered dates, and searched lexicons, and verified problems with the studious. But, alas ! with the wild, the gay, and the giddy, she might also have been found. When sheets were hung across transoms, and stolen lights burned furtively and low, and cigarettes were smoked, and cards were played, and, Oh, fie ! such naughty, naughty stories were whispered, Marcia was not sleeping within her chaste little cot, in the long silent dormitory.

But this harmony of incongruities was not enduring. Perhaps in the course of the long year which embraced within its bosom many dreary disheartening days, sorrow and sympathy, and piety and labor, palled in their attractiveness, as the novel effects of each wore away. Perhaps folly became indiscreet. Certain it is that for a day or two after her return from school, at the commencement of the long vacation, Marcia was most faithful in her attendance at the village post-office. And her scrutiny was soon rewarded by the receipt of a letter directed to her father in the familiar and beloved chirography of her revered preceptress. "Dear teacher," she murmured, "How thoughtful, how kind," as she read the epistle which was couched in the terse, forceful language which had ever dignified the dame in her communications, whether verbal or written. It contained the

opinion, which was mandatory in terms, that it was for the good of the school, as well as for her own benefit, that Marcia should not return. Never since her babyhood, not even in the most pathetic passages of her harrowing description of her mother's death, had so holy, so serene an expression transfigured Marcia's face into glory, as having perused each pregnant word, with a dainty little precision and carefulness which so well became her, she tore the missive into infinitesimal pieces, and the wind scornfully scattered the base accusation.

And when the summer heat was waning, and the holidays had nearly sped away, tears would spring to her eyes and her little hand would clinch with energy, when school was again suggested. She could not leave her father, who was so lonely, her aunt, whose declining years demanded her tenderest care. Besides, she was now a young lady, and quite able to round out and finish her education herself. So she did not return; for they both had secretly longed to so persuade her, and found her unselfish devotion to be the sweetest unguent to their cares. Yet this did not prevent her from accepting with zest the solicitous invitation of her father's sister who lived at Armway. She tearfully left them to make a short visit with her, for she felt that it was her duty to do so. And it was during this sojourn, as has been related, that she won the fervent sympathy of Jonas Chidsy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE room, into which Marcia had entered with such a sudden cessation of pain, was called by her aunt, Mrs. Clenton, the back parlor. Her "help," whose name was Eliza Simpkins, and who was a maiden lady of uncertain age, but of certain views, insisted upon terming it "the setten room." While to the boys, who were unfortunate enough to seek within the starved shades of this house that indefinite quantity and variety of food which is equally blessed for all as "our daily bread," it was known as the "Bridge of sighs"; since it was necessary for them to cross it in order to undergo the tortures which the white folding doors with brass knobs concealed within the dining hall. It was oblong and low-studded; and, through its happy proximity to the kitchen, became the distributing reservoir for ravenous flies and for those culinary odors of the oleaginous sort that settle so thickly and lastingly. Ornamentation had exhausted her resources and had strained her artistic nerve in the decorations which graced it, and educated the sense of beautiful of all who came within its influence. Upon the high wooden mantel, whose fireplace was screened by a striking representation of the return of the Prodigal Son, who was there seen hastening towards a rich roast of veal which his decrepit but joyous father was zealously turning upon a spit, and which had often inspired regret within the minds of the boys that they were not able to leave their husks and do likewise, were lofty china vases, procured from a pedler in exchange for some clothing of the late lamented husband of Mrs. Clenton after he had "gone before"

and presumably had no further use for it; into which were twisted brightly-colored papers curiously cut. The fly-specks, which weighted them down served to charmingly diversify the gradation of hues, through the irregularity with which they had been bestowed. Upon the centre table, whose rare specimen of native marble was warmed by a moss-mat of fluffy green worsted, the naturalness of which fairly transported one to the banks where the wild thyme grows, conscious pride had displayed "Friendship's offering" in red and gilt, a family album which luckily possessed a strong clasp that opened with difficulty, and "Men of our day," sold only by subscription. The floor was scantily covered with homespun carpet, certain shades of which recalled to the bereaved widow, the earliest days of her wedded life, when that old suit, which even the wandering huckster would not buy, was new. But the domestic manufacturer had wearied before completing the required expanse, and so there was left exposed a broad belt of the flooring along the sides, which a lavish expenditure of yellow paint had enriched. While precisely arranged upon this, stiffly set against the walls, as if waiting for the funeral services to commence, were a half-dozen of chairs, a study in deal and horse-hair, whose rigidity foretold boundless fatigue, unless corpulence should haply demolish them. Beneath the soot-begrimed ceiling, upon the chintz-like papering, were suspended an artistic wreath of burrs and oak-leaves; the Battle of Bunker Hill done in cork in *alto relievo* and framed with varnished cones; and the names of the tribes of Israel arranged in the chronological order of the births of their progenitors upon a sampler by Matilda McC., at the phenomenally early age of six years, and supposed to have in part occasioned her untimely demise as was set forth in elegiac verse, inscribed and somberly framed and hung beneath. There was also a striking tribute to mortality, highly

poetical in its directness, exemplified in the key of her coffin, which, decked with the withered flowers that her dead hand had enclosed, was preserved within a glass globe upon a weak-kneed pedestal near by. The sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, immortalized in oils, illumined with oriental splendor the further wall. It was purely imaginative in conception and execution; as was proven by the incongruously vivid tints of the raiment with which these sacred characters were clad, and the physical impossibilities of the destined beast which was so clearly hidden within the adjacent raspberry bushes. And there was the piano, a crowning glory! It had been preceded by a melodeon, that plaintive instrument, whose panting yearnings yield serious respectability to its possessors. But as an additional inducement to the participation in the chaste joys of a truly Christian home, it had passed into the trader's hands; and its melancholy tones, which had always reminded Eliza Simpkins of Heaven and of her sainted brother who had died before she was born and whose memory was consequently most near and dear to her, were dispelled by the squeaky staccato of the treble and the blunt discord of the bass of a musical treasure, that penury alone had caused a highly cultured family, who had met with undeserved reverses, to place upon the market.

Around this relic of departed luxury were clustered, when Marcia entered, a half dozen of lads of that indefinite age which forestalls manhood; when the voice has just deepened into steadiness, and the beard is a hopeful contingency; when the limbs have hardly grown to be accustomed to their rapid lengthening, and exhibit their consciousness through ever present awkwardness.

Bulwer's priggish hero, Ernest Maltravers, at the ripe age of eighteen, was a model of courtly grace, from whose ready tongue the pearls of philosophy

dropped in profusion. But his counterpart did not obtain among them. They were shy, bashful, confused. As she approached them they stirred uneasily, an incoherent murmur arose whose subject was the condition of the weather, and hot blushes and twitching fingers betrayed nervousness. Each one thought of himself with vain aspirations towards gallantry which the present ruthlessly disappointed. Each one, except George Dorne, who was lolling upon the settle in front of the piano, whose equanimity was in no respect disturbed. He acknowledged her presence by a careless nod of recognition, not rising, nor removing his cap which clung to the tightly curling locks of his shapely head, and with natural confidence continued his song, adding to the usual number of verses, several of his own composition which, while shaky in metre, were pointed and apt in their blunt references to local affairs.

"Marcia," said he, as he concluded his ditty with a crash of rude melody, for he played as instinctively and mellifluously as sing the negroes upon a southern plantation, "You missed it, such fun I never see! You know that between Prex Wheeler's house and the second story of the academy there swings a wire line across the campus and full forty feet high. Why or wherefore it was originally put there, I don't know ; but probably some idiot of a Professor once upon a time thought that he would practice telegraphy with the cook. At any rate, there it has been ever since my sentence of exile here began ; and I have often wondered how it might be utilized, for such a lack of purpose seemed sinful. Well, you know that down at the "Fem. Sem.", for that's what we call Miss Rigg's school for girls, they have a female skeleton in the gymnasium to teach the scholars how peculiarly and fearfully they are made, and how they look when quite undressed I suppose. We touched her up with phosphorus one night, and

nearly scared the linch-pins out of the janitress when she entered without a light. Well, up in the Academy we've got a male 'un. It represents what is left of a theologue who accidentally happened in upon a class rush. Well, they both have ring screws in the tops of their little heads by which they can be suspended. And I hope to smother if this morning when the old dame was leading out her flock to walk, so that their young ideas might shoot more rapidly, if there, half-way over the campus, swinging hand in hand in the pure empyrean, like two disembodied spirits reunited in death, were not these two skeletons, 'two souls with but a single taut,' I presume, and that a wire one. Oh, I beat me sides with laughter." And "Buck" as George was familiarly called, rocked in his mirth from side to side and finally rolled upon the floor.

"How deliciously romantic," laughed Marcia joining with him heartily. "It quite reminds me of that tender passage which has always been a favorite with me." And with pretty precision she repeated:

> "'And on her lover's arm she leant
> And round her waist she felt it fold,
> And so across the hills they went
> In that new world which is the old.'

Oh dear, I fear, George, that I am as ridiculous to day as you", she sighed, as she daintily dried her eyes which were bedewed with merriment.

The other boys had joined George in his glee, but not boisterously. They were amazed at his audacity in relating such a story in so loose and indifferent a manner; and they had awaited with bated breath the reproof of the stinging glance and the indignant departure which would surely greet his ill-timed daring. But when the stately Miss Clenton, whose presence in the dining hall for the past fortnight had chilled into conventionality their ordinary habit and speech, had not

only seemed to be delighted with the recital, but had actually supplemented it with an ironically pat quotation, they were dumfounded. With significant expressions of wonder they silently left the room, and were soon busily engaged in nourishing their muddled brains, with oatmeal, "Carefully selected oatmeal" they called it; for their solicitous hostess was known to painfully examine and work it over before it was finally prepared, in order that she might remove any animal life from what in her regimen was designed to be a purely vegetable diet.

George threw himself lazily upon the frail frame that encompassed the glory of the best sofa, and its varnished joints creaked loudly in protestation against such abuse of its weakness. He reclined his head upon his arm, and, in the dronish content with which rest draped his members relaxed by a long afternoon of exercise with bat and ball, seemed to be oblivious of his fair companion. She came to his side and looked down upon him, with deep interest riveting her gaze.

"Promise me, George," she said, "that you will be more careful in the future. You will certainly be caught in some one of these wicked scrapes, for I know that you are involved in all of them. And surely you do not wish to be sent away while I am here."

"Don't you bother your head about me," replied Buck. She watched him closely as he cuddled more comfortably upon his great brawny arm. Beneath his heavy eyebrows, which marked his face with determination, his yellowish brown eyes smouldered in sullen sleepiness that evinced no concern in her loveliness. The rich and copious blood pulsated beneath his deeply tanned cheek, and almost started from his full crimson lips which, half parted, disclosed glimpses of his powerful and perfect teeth. His flannel shirt was loosely bound by his flowing neckerchief, and unfolded the contrast of his

bronzed throat with the boyish whiteness of his chest. His upper lip had been touched by the pencil of early manhood. Upon his hands, battered by sport, the light hair shone like a glove of gossamer. Upon one, there was a deep cut over which the blood had scarcely coagulated; and upon the other, was a greenish bruise. While his fingers were twisted and thickened as though old age had been pulling at their joints. His shoulders exhibited the breadth of a young giant; and beneath the closely fitting, clinging texture of his rough-and-ready suit, the hard muscles stood forth at every movement. His locks had been moist with the exercise of the day, and were matted upon his forehead. His feet were shod in canvass shoes with sharp spikes in the soles. Everything about him denoted strength and vigor and virility, and he breathed out an essence of masculinity. From the first, he had strangely interested her and excited her curiosity. His abruptness piqued her. The forces of his nature overwhelmed her. The very day she had arrived in Armway, he had addressed her by her Christian name with the easy familiarity of an old family friend. And she had not resented it, for she appreciated that her anger would be of no avail. It would not trouble him and would unnecessarily discommode her. Besides, she liked it. The novelty was piquant and persuasive. She, who had been a queen absolute within her realm, limited though it had been, now enjoyed the submissiveness of a hand-maiden. She soon surpassed him in friendliness, interesting herself in sports although they seemed to be inane in their senseless waste of time and energy, and in the boyish talk and gossip with its peculiar vocabulary and restricted view, which at first she had contemptuously disregarded as the merest drivel.

"What would you do, George," she continued, "If, some night when you are prowling about upon one of

these ridiculous pranks, instead of being soundly asleep in your room, you should meet the watchman ?"

She spoke in a tone tinged with awe, as if approaching a subject weighty with obligation. For this personage, by the way, was the idol of the village. He denoted the step towards municipality, in which it had surpassed all of its sisters who united in forming the crown that decked the surrounding country. He was a portly man, of liberal habit, who added dignity and lustre to Armway, at least in the eyes of its denizens, far exceeding that which was shed by the Theological Seminary or the Academy, both of which paid tribute for his maintenance. He was more picturesque than useful ; and represented the authority, rather than the power of the law. For corpulency impeded activity, and he found the angle of the Seminary fence to be most alluring. There he leaned idly swinging his cane to and fro during the long hours of his duty. A tower of strength, and an ambush, and a terror to evil-doers, he appeared to be to the pale young theologue who hurriedly passed him as he hastened to say grace and carve for his board ; but the boys had their doubts, doubts that he had wisely never given them an opportunity to test. He knew them all and called them easily by name, as they sped schoolward in close competition with the clanging bell ; but after hours, he lost sight and hearing and remembrance, and his attention was never distracted from the glowing coals within his pipe.

"I'd hit him a swipe that I guess he wouldn't soon forget," said George scowling fiercely and for the moment becoming slightly animated. "But there's no danger of his ever tackling me," he continued, moodily, and with fine contempt.

"I had such an adventure this afternoon, I must tell you all about it for I know it will amuse you," resumed Marcia, anxiously striving to excite his attention. And

she related her meeting with Jonas, and the pious engagements that she had made with him. The girl seemed transformed by puissant magic. Her habit of self-control and secrecy, that had continually enveloped her with derm-like adhesiveness had fallen away. A burning desire to change his apathy into ardor seized upon her and rendered her indiscreet. She loved herself, and surely this wild lad must be allured by her peculiar temperament and furtive audacity.

"It was such fun," she continued. "At first he was as frigid as an iceberg, but when I inclined quite heavily upon his arm, and looked into his face with plaintive beseeching, and revealed my childish trustfulness to him, he glowed like an ember fanned by the wind. I am an enigma to him and he will seek to solve me. I am a soulful ideal that shames yet curiously stirs him. I hold him in my grasp like a bit of earth, that crumbles into dust at a finger's pinch. I shall amuse myself with him while I am in Armway. It's so poky and dull, and Naomi wearies me so with her platitudes about duty and life's purpose, and you are so infatuated with your senseless games. Besides, I can retaliate a little upon her 'Saintship,' and where is the woman who fails to pay a grudge!—Do you know him, George?"

"Know him? well I should rather say that I did! You see, we boys divide all theologues, unlike Gaul, into two parts. Those toward whom we preserve an armed neutrality, and those upon whom we wage a war of extermination. He belongs to this latter class, and we've always had it in for him and baited him, when we've had the chance, like a rat in a pit. It is only because he's such a solitary bird and keeps so much out of the way, that we've not settled his career in short order. You see we think that he would spy upon us if he could. Some of them mind their own business and are good fellows. But he doesn't and he

ısn't. He's a friend of Tutor Stanson and that's sufficient. But what's all this stuff about a grudge?"

"I do not really mean anything by it, but Naomi is so provokingly righteous and so flaunts her guilelessness in one's face. And she has boasted so much about him, how good he is, and what celestial attainments he possesses, that I should like to show her that he is attracted by me with all my worldliness, and that the only perfection upon this earth is the perfection of beauty and grace. Besides, I hate prudes! See, George, how unreservedly I talk with you, I, who have never had a confidant, but you influence me against my judgment, and I forget that you are only a droll little boy and that I am so much older than you."

She leaned upon the back of the sofa, and while she talked, her little hand like a bending lily, hovered over his head, her fingers softly caressing the shining locks which curled as tightly as did those that in the pagan age of gold wreathed the brows of Hercules and Bacchus.

"Now look a here, Marcia Clenton," said the boy, suddenly starting to his feet and shaking off sloth in his eagerness, "I like you, you are so jolly and so different from what I at first thought you were. But no didoes with Naomi. We boys may ridicule and scoff at 'most everything, but we are all her trusty champions. She has been a sister to us, yes, the best kind of an elder sister, who is almost a mother, and if she likes this cranky theologue, which I never knew before, why, your hands must come off, and so must ours for that matter. He becomes tabooed like the feller in "Typee." But what's the matter with you girls anyway, don't you ever like each other?"

The boy's loyal and generous words reacted upon her impulsiveness with the shock of an icy draught. She felt that she had exceeded the bounds of prudence, and that she had not discriminated between recklessness and

depravity. She had disclosed a glimpse of her true self, and its unveiled nudity had been unsightly. A retreat was necessary, her batteries must again be masked. Tears invaded her voice, and rolled in gems of sorrow down her cheeks as she piteously said :

" I fear that I was born under a malignant star ! My purest motives are always misconstrued. My heart is filled with love for Naomi ; and yet you attribute such wicked, wicked thoughts to me. Ah ! true affection must be sinful, its penalties are so bitter. He has annoyed her with persistent attentions, but so craftily as not to have excited comment. She detests and fears him, yet she is so simple and so innocent that she cannot rid herself of him. I thought that I would entice him away, and that after she was surely relieved, we three could then have a good joke over it. But now I suppose you will betray my plans, you are so cruel and unjust."

" There is no use of beefing about it," replied George, relapsing into ease and burying in reassurance his former apprehensions, " If that's the case, you may trust me to be mum. Go ahead with the picnic, and I will take a stick to the animal and poke him up a bit myself."

He yawned portentously, and his heavily drooping eyelids almost hid his significant glance towards the door. Yet she interpreted its impatience and it nearly distracted her. Could nothing affect the stolid calm of this boy !

" Oh I nearly forgot to show you," she said, as she coyly lifted her tiny foot to the level of the sofa upon which he was reclining. " See how badly I wrenched the sole this afternoon between those flags. Do you think that it could be repaired ? "

The lilac clocks gleamed as he grasped her carelessly and with utter contempt and disregard for those sentiments of propriety that had so governed Jonas.

" Why, George, you hurt me, you are so rough." she

exclaimed. He laughed a short hard laugh and finally said, as he turned away and pressed his face against the prickly hair cloth : "Don't bother me, Marcia ; don't you see that I am sleepy." She quietly left him, for she heard Mrs. Clenton's strident voice calling to her. "Yes, dear Auntie, I am coming," she sweetly answered, and as demurely as a maiden hastening to the shrine at vesper hour, she glided from the room.

And George slept, yet within his mind a thought was germinating, whose growth would be as luxuriant as the forced cultivation of the hot-house can ensure.

CHAPTER V.

At this period of his life, George Dorne had attained the height of human felicity. He possessed many true and loyal friends, so many that he could scarcely number them upon his fingers and toes, while most men could safely dispense with nine-tenths of these extremities and yet have an ample sufficiency for such an enumeration. His comrades idealized him, which perhaps accounts for their sincerity, since accurate knowledge of human nature deadens the affections. He was their hero and champion, and, perhaps again, the reflection of his glory upon them unconsciously increased their regard; for vanity is the balance-wheel of life. His faults they ignored, and since their consequences were always personal to him alone, they escaped their attention. His preëminent qualities of manliness and sturdy good fellowship, since they were in themselves pleasurable, they exalted.

A large classical school breeds a subtle, penetrating influence that even the dullard cannot withstand. It is bathed in the glowing atmosphere of the unreal past; it shines with the light which is reflected from burnished shields and glancing spears, and altars rich with hecatombs. Fleeting shadows, and rigid effigies, that have hardened beneath the storms of ages, are reanimated and endowed with expression. The gods again dwell upon Mount Ida and mingle in the affairs of men; and the plains of the Scamander again resound with the crash of brass, the blare of the trumpet, and the pounding rush of the hoof and the chariot wheel. To even the most indifferent of the students, Zeus, and the ox-eyed Hera, and the crafty Ulysses, and Agamemnon, king of

men, and the pious Æneas, and Achilles sulking in his tent, are not merely representatives of significant characters, but entities who tone their lives, brighten their speech, and people their imagination. The dreamy old world of heroes and demi-gods, of feats of personal strength and muscular victories, of deities associating with men and of men becoming deities, lies wholly within their horizon ; while beyond the encircling blue extends, like an unknown country, the conditions and limitations of their own time.

The Academy at Armway was sturdy in its allegiance to Greece and to Rome. Its modern boundary for learning was the golden age of Augustus. Its ancient confine, the mist-enveloped days that conceived Homer. Duration lent enchantment to its curriculum, and dust denoted fertility. Its founder had led the van of those who had levelled the primeval forest, and had impregnated the fallow soil. Yet unceasing labor had not restricted his vision to his own granaries. His knowledge of antiquity was embraced within the map of Palestine that embellished his well-thumbed Bible. So, when he sought to rear a monument more lasting than bronze, he piously enjoined the cultivation of the learning of the ancients. His ample endowment, so curiously diverted from Jehovah to Jupiter, had enabled the Academy to resist the assault of years, and the flux of time, and to preserve its classical course, regardless alike of good and evil report, as unchanging and unchangeable as were the laws of the Medes and the Persians.

So it was natural that among its students the strongest and the pluckiest should be the most famous, natural that the physical hero should be deemed most worthy of homage. But inclination does not breed perfection in this crotchety world ; if it did, all mankind, like Enoch, would speedily be translated. The school which the

pious old Puritan in his simplicity had designed to be a postern-gate to the straight and narrow path, became a broad archway leading to the Elysian fields. Its culture was materialistic in its tendencies, and exhibited man as a splendid animal, ignoring the brutality which all animals inherit as a birthright. A set curriculum is a firm mould into which every form is pressed without regard to its natural outline. The mould may be a good one, but some forms will be hopelessly ruined by a vain attempt at adaptation. Weak, puny boys, dwarfed and enervated by coddling mothers, became at Armway manful and self-reliant; but George Dorne required the nerved hand and the forceful curb that disciplines the blooded colt into absolute obedience. No such restraint however bound him. The class-room, of course, exercised its regulations upon him; but the influence of its studies excited him with riotous exultations, and moved his comrades to incite him with applause. His physical luxuriance and intrepidity of spirit placed him upon the pedestal of a demi-god, and the incense of adulation intoxicated him. When he "rushed" the foot-ball across the campus, marking his course with the prone bodies of his foes, he seemed to his companions to be as glorious as was Achilles when he dragged dead Hector at his chariot heel around the walls of Troy. When he accepted the boastful challenge of the Chief of the Independent Fire Company of the village, and so pummelled him that he speedily cried "enough," they recalled in triumphant comparison how the youthful Hercules had strangled the Hydra within his fist. What though he stumbled through his translations, tripping over the indirect discourse, and trembling before the intricacies of the subjective dative, notwithstanding the aid of the benign Anthon which, though prescribed, he secretly invoked. What though he mouthed his Greek like a Bœotian taunted by the polite Athenians. Still he

was their Æneas, their Dux, their leader, and each one longed to attain the lofty distinction of being his fidus Achates.

And his disposition did not repel them; but was a puissant auxiliary to his popularity. It was kindly and equable. He was never irritable, for his nerves were as unknown to him as was his pancreas. He despised a dispute or a discussion; for it was a waste of time, and time meant opportunity for enjoyment. He was tolerant in his strength like a mastiff, and slow to anger; for his passions, though violent, were sluggish. He was neither cunning nor strategic in his methods; for his thoughts and expectations were as open as the expression of his face. Motives he had not. His character was as simple and as limpid as a mountain stream before it crosses civilization's path. Thought never disturbed him; for his thoughtfulness consisted either of pleasurable anticipations or of delightful reminiscences. His will was his master, and the impossibilities of life had not yet impaired the temper of his spirit. The powerful set of his jaws, the sturdiness of his figure, which lacked sufficient height to grace its massiveness, all denoted tenacity and endurance. Linked with ambition, his inherent forces would have dragged him to any goal; but they were lulled and smothered by content. He loved the dust of a physical contest, and the fierce pulse of his blood heated by impetuous exertion. But when it was over, he loved, the best of all, to lie stretched upon the sward, and to listen to the hum of nature, and to bask in that same sunlight that had nourished the naked limbs of the Greeks, and to feel the restful quiet of its kiss steal through his members and the dusk of slumber to darken his vision, and to haply weave those reflections that are sisters to dreams.

His code of morals was limited and concise; but he

was most scrupulous in his observance of its tenets. Its disciples were many among his comrades; for the trend of their education fostered it. It was to be loyal to one's friends, never to lie to them, to be manly and plucky and unshrinking from pain and hardship, and finally to do all forbidden things the performance of which did not conflict with any of these precepts. So many were the nights that George had staggered to his bed, and had felt it revolve in ceaseless gyrations as it artfully eluded the rapidly pursuing bookcase and pictures that had deserted their accustomed posts upon the wall; and deep were his potations of beer and whiskey, which would have been naturally distasteful to his healthy appetite were not they smuggled, and sweetened by the elixir of disobedience and danger of detection. Many were the nights that with valiant reliance in himself, he had tramped the long solitary road from Simpington after a midnight dance with the mill hands, his way lightened by the music of careless laughter that lingered in his ears, and by the remembrance of the caresses that still bedewed his lips.

O, forbidden fruit of Eden, thy exquisite flavor still tempts, thy fairness still bewilders! Were thy allurements as distasteful as thy effects are bitter, the curtain would quickly unroll upon the tragedy of life!

George was endowed with a clear bass voice whose vibrations resembled the rumble of distant thunder, and quivered the chords of sympathy within the sweep of its waves. His memory was well stored with ditties about a glass and a lass, and the true joys that love will bring, and the kisses of maidens fair; and he sung them with such relish and keenness of appreciation that his boyish auditors believed that experience inspired his tones. Nor did this reputation injure him in their favoring eyes. It was but another leaf of laurel in the wreath with which their Cæsar was crowned.

Besides the classics arouse amativeness. If they evolve any influence, it is essentially sensuous. The tales of the loves of the gods and the godesses, of Venus and the doughty Mars discovered within the net by the wily Vulcan, of Leda embracing the swan, of the gentle Europa fleeing in vain, of Diana caressing the sleeping shepherd, of Ariadne bemoaning the touch of the faithless Bacchus, of Dido in the thunderstorm seeking refuge within the cave, of Perseus bearing through the air the naked form of the clinging Andromeda, of the infamy of Clytemnestra, and of the insane lust of Pasiphae ; these are the oases within the desert wilds of syntax, whose fertility refreshes the weary plodder and the remembrance of the sweetness of whose waters clings, when datives and aorists and subjunctives are but names of forgotten guide-posts.

O grim old Puritan, mouldering in thy self-assured complacency, the particles of thy dust would repel each other with horror couldst thou know the iniquities of that ancient world which thy thrift hath outspread before these wondering lads, whose knowledge of evil exceeds that which threescore of years brought to thee! The painful thrust of thy mattock hath laid bare many a marble resplendent in its shameless unchastity !

Achilles had his Briseis, and Numa his Egeria, and Hercules his Omphale, and Ulysses his Calypso ; surely it was fitting that George Dorne, their counterpart, should prove irresistible to the village beauties, and that the rumor of his conquests, flying from lip to lip in youthful exaggeration, should magnify his heroic proportions. And there was a foundation of fact to these rumors, which the boys knew as well as they knew that their own narratives were as unsubstantial as the visions that fright can conjure. For they all boasted of their exceeding gallantry and powers of fascination. Even those who had cowered before Marcia's glance

when she had entered the room, and had failed to find the appropriate word or to conceive the apposite thought until it was too late ; when relieved from such embarrassment, could rival the tales of Bocacchio and of Margaret of Navarre in the relating of their own brief experience. Even the rosy-cheeked, fair-haired little lad, who still covertly regretted the touch of his mother's gentle fingers in his morning toilet, and who often at night cried himself to sleep as he thought of her, assumed the confident tones of the *roué*, and enunciated precepts that his success had proven and found most potent.

Grave men of business, befogged by the hum-drum of life, will brighten under the sparks of salaciousness. These boys overflowing with vigor and with the red blood of youth, inhaled romanticism and sensuousness. Of course it kindled their imagination, and directed their thoughts and conversation. But what they secretly doubted in each other, they all implicitly believed in George. And since he achieved and they pretended, they worshipped him the more, and he gained an air of assurance and boldness that to the sensitive would have been repulsive, had not the glamour of youth transformed it.

So when Marcia had appeared within their boarding house, like a tender flower blooming in the waste of a gravel pit, he had met her carelessly and indifferently, but without self-consciousness or embarrassment. At first, he had accosted her with that apathy, which he imagined age and association would inspire within her towards him, for he was proud of his independence, and though she seemed to be a queen, he scorned the sway of her sceptre. But at length the frequency of their encounters, and the magnetism of sex, concentrated his interest. For passion is contagious, and nature provides no quarantine for its avoidance.

The fairies that attended the birth of George had bestowed upon him bold, dancing, laughing eyes. His glance could awaken mirth without occasion. Their directness disconcerted Marcia; and when she was alone, she confessed to herself that their slumbering power fascinated her. Their sparkle said, "When I choose I will," and she read, within them, thoughts far too deep to have been conceived within the inactivity of his mind. Nor was this entirely the freak of girlish imagination. His control over his comrades often exceeded their regard or his express intention. There was a masterful quality about him, which he exerted, even though he recognized it not. His father was a physician, tucked away in a little village within the furthermost angle of the State, yet his fame had spread fan-like through it. He was old fashioned and bigoted, and rightly classed within the oldest of the old school; yet he fulfilled his mission, he cured. His powers of diagnosis were intuitive and apparently miraculous, his control over his patients was absolute. Hysteria and mania and all of that ghastly host, who prey at once upon body and mind, vanished before the cold steely rays of his eyes. He was a healer, saving not through the stored knowledge of experience and laborious research, but through the forces that nature had centered within him. Now his son resembled him and was a part of him, as the sapling opposes to the storm the vigor of the oak. And though he appreciated it not, for frivolity, and not contemplation, was his vassal, the spark of rulership glowed brightly within him.

George had been born in this petty country town, and had spent his boyhood days with its children. The beauties of the grammatical correctness of English speech, though carefully inculcated within his mind, never overcame the ascendency of their peculiar colloquy. Habit conquered knowledge, and the rusticity of his tongue

was a characteristic as quickly recognizable as the ring of his laughter or the heartiness of his greeting. It was always remembered of him, and related with a regretful seriousness, within whose shadow merriment lurked, that when the great game of baseball was played between the Academy nine, and those supernal beings who represented the University, when each boy simulated the carriage and the grace of an admitted freshman, and dignity stalked among them, a grateful ally, that after an exceptionally good play by one upon his side, when the silence which follows a burst of applause had barely settled, he had sung out to the successful player in his most stentorian tones which rang in the ears of those watching at the extreme confines of the campus : "Jim, you done good" ; and mortification tempered the joys of their victory. Yet even this defect, humiliating as it would be to others, troubled him not ; while it afforded amusement and interest to his listeners and enchained their attention.

Indeed, all of these peculiar features which undoubtedly would, as maturity established her immobility upon him, render him self-assertive, mouthy and objectionable to every one except to himself, now in his tender years gave to him a piquancy and a charm that was almost invincible. For boyishness is a mirror that reflects every aspect in fresh sweet colors. He was so healthful, he was so happy. Each day winged its hours with pleasures that fled not until others fluttered within view. Each night, the anticipations of the morrow courted balmy dreams. He never knew a pain nor an ache, and trouble like an unwelcome guest, never aroused the echoes of sadness by its knock at his door. For thought invites trouble. At all hours, his laughter resounded throughout the village. And the staidest old farmer, whose only expectations were toil, as he labored in the field, felt the rigid corners of his grim compressed

mouth relax against his will and curl in grudging unison, as he muttered to himself: "There's that young rascal 'Buck' Dorne agin." It is said that the gods protect sailors and children, they are so helpless and irresponsible. If they do, and it is an employment far more fitting than that ascribed to them by the classic poets, they surely watched over him for he was much more regardless of consequences than are they. In any undertaking which vagrant fancy induced him to attempt, he merely said to himself: "I'll come out all right," and dismissed further worry from his mind. He had been taught at his mother's knee that he had within himself a certain guide, his conscience, which would distinguish for him the right from the wrong; and he believed her, for her words were as manifest to him as was the light of the sun. Yet this secret monitor was as unknown to him as was his God, and the voice of each was dumb.

Unquestionably, remorse could shake his composure; but this remorse must arise from the unpleasant results of discovery. But as yet exposure had never apprehended him. So, too, the fear of death might quench his ardor; but sound nerves had consigned it to that distant future within whose obscurity senility skulks. That period which marks the commencement of life had not yet conquered him, when the possibilities of eternity are realized. He was still a child, sold into captivity, playing the live-long day before his enemy's tent, unconscious that the altar which would redden with his blood, from the height of the frowning hill casts its shadow athwart his path. His imperfections were as many as are the waves that break upon the sands; yet like them they sparkled with the glitter of juvenility.

O, joyous thoughtlessness of youth, it is thy magic alone that can create the Fortunate Isles, or people Utopia! Too soon will come the pressing ills of life, and the unknown dread of its ending. Too soon the

shrinkings of midnight will banish sleep, the protracted ticked-out minutes will generate fear, the countings of the pulse and the intermitting beatings of the heart will foretell mortality! Too soon existence which has been so gladsome, will become most horrible, because it is shown to be unsought and enforced, and yet not so horrible as the uncertainties of eternity! Laugh on, poor lad, rejoice in thy petty strength. Love and revel and weave into garlands the roses that time now showers upon thee! Happy art thou if, in thy contentment, unceasing slumber shalt enfold thee! Happy, if thou shalt thus escape the quickening flight of shortening hours and the creeping twilight of unending night!

CHAPTER VI.

"NAOMEE," "Naomee," rang through the house from earliest cock-crow, until the breakfast was served upon the table. The voice of Mrs. Clenton, like Macbeth, murdered sleep. It was anomalous in its hideousness. No such distinctive sound had ever startled the air, since the song of the morning star. It combined the stridency of beaten tin, with the squalk of the peacock. Before it all space vanished, and it pierced doors and walls with utmost ease. No need was there of gong or bell to arouse the slumbering boys. The cry of "Naomee," "Naomee," like "The voice of that wild horn on Font-arabian echoes borne," stirred all into action.

Like the majority of shrill musical instruments, Mrs. Clenton was diminutive in size. Time seemed to compress her, as costly fabrics are carefully stored for future use. Her activity was so ceaseless, that it would have overcome any tendency towards adipose tissue; but she had no such tendency. She was naturally a female Cassius. It is possible that in her youth she had been sprightly and winning, that her eyes had been bright, not eager, and that her nose had been a pure specimen of the classic Roman-type, and not a beak ever seeking closer communion with her chin. It is possible that her endless volubility was then entertaining in its childish simplicity, and that there had really been a touch of tenderness in her tones when she had addressed the late

lamented "J. M.", as she had invariably termed her spouse,—his name by the way was John Milton Clenton, but she deemed it to be incompatible with his lowliness of spirit—who, but a few years after he had attained the supreme felicity of "Our being all in all to each other, of constant companionship, and of journeying down life's pathway hand in hand together, darling," as he had frequently said and fondly dreamed during the linked sweetness of their courtship, had become so dejected over his sorry lot that he had died from grief. Possibly her spring-time had possessed some kindliness, and girlhood, its ordinary enchantment, for it is written that all things are possible; but certain it is that at this period of her earthly probation, "Mammy" Clenton was well described by the boys as a "Holy Terror," the adjective in this instance being purely intensitive, and not denoting any sacred significance.

Her main characteristic was greed; and her boarding-house for students, "Where good wholesome food was supplemented by the influence of a Christian home and by motherly care," was its outward manifestation. Those who entered there left all hope behind, and those who came to scoff remained to prey with all of the ferocity that unappeased hunger breeds, upon the insufficient comestibles which she grudgingly supplied. For the system prevailed at Armway, and the beauties of its disadvantages could be discoursed upon by the volume, that students upon their entrance into the Academy should be assigned to definite boarding-houses, and there should remain during the entire course. Now Mrs. Clenton was socially strong. She was a widow, with one fatherless daughter striving meekly to bear her yoke, and to "git along." And "git along" she did. Her house was as full, as her boarders were not. She

was regarded as easily first among the others of her craft in the village, who recognized her as their grand high priestess, and who were willing proselytes to her cult. She established a tariff of prices, and a code of rules and regimen; and woe betide the unfortunate female who ventured to err upon the side of mercy. As the vestal virgins were most vindictive towards their fallen sister, so these good women would have spattered one so base with the foulest ignominy. Mrs. Clenton knew all of the tricks of her trade, and practised them. Damaged goods were her delight. She could, or she thought she could, and this answered her purpose fully as well, freshen meat, and rejuvenate eggs with vinegar, and eradicate the mould from flour, and work lard into butter. She could calculate to a nicety the exact addition of chiccory and bread crumbs, that coffee could stand and still remain coffee, and how much sand, brown sugar could sweeten. She was a mathematical wonder in determining the greatest common divisor for occasional pastry, and the least common multiple for oil and wood.

"Naomee" was her daughter. Perhaps if her father had ever known of her existence, his grief would have been less selfish and violent. But before she was born, six months of seclusion beneath the cheap flatteries of a broken column had been his lot. Possibly the pincushioned front that now maintained a metallic rigidity had then been a cradle rocked by the billows of love. For maternity will mollify the rage of the tigress. But since she had first stepped from the unknown sea upon memory's shore, Naomi had advanced from the neglect of childhood into a condition of unceasing drudgery. Her days were rounded by labor, which she performed without a murmur. She saved for her mother the wages

of a dozen scullions, and to avoid the expense of one, her mother would have imperilled her soul's salvation. No sensation of shame stung this modern Cornelia, who so assiduously cherished her one precious jewel, as she saw her straining her young frame over the toils of the kitchen, or arranging the rooms of great growing boys. She only lifted her heart in thanksgiving for the blessings that motherhood had vouchsafed her, and allotted still another task.

But fortunately Naomi derived many advantages and no detriment from her necessarily close association with the students who boarded with her mother. They never molested her; for at first sympathy, and then affection, restrained the rudest. She was a sister to those who had known her for the longest time, attending to their wants with sisterly affection and solicitude; and evil had befallen the new-comer who dared to think evil of her. The tense lines of her life had not impressed their traceries upon Naomi. Like the edelweiss, the rocks and the storms endowed her with ideality. Her complexion was as fair and as milky as is the fleecy little cloud that heightens the serenity of a perfect summer day by daring to break the all-pervading cerulean hues of the ether. Varying exertion had unfolded and rounded her figure, and had accentuated its natural elegance by suppleness and strength. Her hands, though slightly roughened, were exquisitely small. They tapered with the grace of a Spanish glove, and were dimpled by the kisses of childhood. Beneath her broad low forehead, her nut-brown eyes spoke frankness and purity in tones that exceeded semblance. Her unrestrained intercourse with the boys had sharpened her faculties, and had given the keenness of a rapier to her wit. From them too she had derived the

taste and opportunity for reading; and many were the midnight hours which she had snatched from deserving rest, to gain from the poets and the novelists new friends, whose companionship would gild the toilsome hours of the morrow. She was thus able to join in their conversation with a knowledge and a zest that was even more valuable to her mother in her successful management of the boarding-house, than was what the boys called "Her pull with the pantry."

Naomi was cheerful of disposition, and challenged trouble with a laugh. She was confiding and trustful to the innermost chords of her heart. And upon these qualities depended her vigor and vitality. Her faith in her friends sustained her as did the oxygen in the air; and should she lose either she would speedily fade away. For her health was relative, it was rooted upon the buoyancy of her spirit, and this was preserved by her belief in goodness.

In the long hours of her work, she had woven many a romance with her brain as busily engaged as were her hands. The sharp actualities of her life, and the sentimentalism of her reading diverted the current of her reveries towards the ideal. She longed for rest, for the extinguishment of physical force, and for the communion of soul that mental identity can afford. If she could only be removed to some Isle of the Blest where soft perfumed zephyrs would waft dreamy harmonies over her, where no sound would arrive save the fanning of the wings of richly plumed birds, the nodding and the bending of flowers and the drip of dulcet cascade; and if amid such scenes, that other should come, of pure and noble disposition, linked by sympathy and affinity to her, who would read her thoughts and motives because he knew his own, how happy she

would be ! And irresistibly would appear before her, a tall haggard form in priestly garb, with pale and rigid face, and eyes of deep and fathomless melancholy. For the hero of her innocent little fantasy was always Jonas Chidsy.

Although his friendship was distant, and tempered with indifference, and although he only distinguished her from the multitude of pious women who delighted to foster the church by pampering its disciples, by the remembrance of one incident, and that the help which her earnest sympathy had rendered him in a moment of trial ; she felt and believed that their hopes and aspirations were in accord, and that she clearly discerned the beauty and strength of his exceptional character. She had watched him upon his solitary walks, as with head bowed low and measured step, he had strode along, the personification of exalted meditation. She had studied him at service in the chapel. She had marked the pressure of his hands upon his face, and had counted the tears that trickled between his fingers. He represented to her a type of godly manhood far removed from her surroundings. His austerity spiritualized him. She arrayed his scant nature in the choicest robes of her chaste imagination. She made unto herself an image of goodness and truth graven in his likeness, and she fell down and worshipped it.

When Marcia had arrived in Armway, and had perceived how hardly used was her little cousin, her sympathy was unbounded and many were her proffers of assistance. She would lighten her burdens, and the hours thus gained would glow with the pleasures of friendship. The intimacy between them developed as rapidly as did Jonah's gourd, or Aladdin's

palace. Like all girlish affections, it was distinguished by those firm attributes that reasonably promise endurance. Night after night, wrapped in each other's arms, their guileless blushes hidden by the mantle of darkness, they exchanged the closest confidences. And pure and simple as had ever been Naomi's thoughts and anticipations, they were exceeded in their immaculateness by the ennobled expressions of her cousin. So much so that she felt that she was shamed by such surpassing excellence, and excoriated her ingenuous little heart on account of its inherent turpitude.

Thus it was that Marcia heard of Jonas, and obtained so exaggerated a view of his character. Sweet, indeed, was this communion to Naomi; but soon, alas, the blighting frost of distrust nipped this blooming plant of affection. For the first time in her life, she suspected sincerity. This doubt, from the faintest breath, gradually enlarged into a thick cloud that overcast her mind and sickened her with its gloom. The intensity of her delight agonized the discovery of falsity. Yet it was inevitable; for Marcia, though anxious to retain good will, was far too selfish and slothful to express her commiseration by deeds. Blinded as her cousin was by credulity, she could not fail to discern the contrast between honeyed words and heedless exactions that redoubled her daily task. Besides Marcia had always been possessed by a mocking imp of ridicule, who loved without apparent design, to gibe, to stab and to pain, and whose impetuosity often conquered her judgment. Naomi's unintentional display of cheerfulness and purity would sometimes exasperate her beyond control, and then a sneer or an ironical thrust would betray her. Moreover, Naomi was sagacious. For years she had trained herself to study the faces and ascertain the

qualities of newly-arrived scholars. Now that mistrust directed her attention, she remarked many inconsistencies between Marcia's portrait of herself which she had so devotedly admired, and the real Marcia. Her clear intellect solved her motives, and fathomed her glances and interpreted the purposes of the artless audacity which occasionally indicated her postures and speech. So coldness separated the hearts that had throbbed in such tender concert, and the midnight whisperings were stilled. But Naomi had opened the door of her most secret shrine, and had displayed its treasures to irreverent and covetous eyes.

When, through her accident, Marcia had encountered Jonas, she had recognized him at once and had readily appreciated how his appearance alone, working upon the fancy of an unsophisticated young girl, had produced the flattering picture which had been exhibited to her. Innate craving for worshipful attention joined with a strong desire to mortify and distress her cousin, had urged her upon his subjugation. She would prove to her that this saintly and soulful young man would yield an obeisance to her beauty, that prudishness had failed to obtain. For she appreciated that it was not her selfishness alone that had alienated her cousin. She feared that she was known, she, who had always draped herself within the veil of purity ; and she vowed that rued should be the day of her discovery. She observed that Jonas had the diffidence of conceit, and that his shallow mind would never find anything unnatural or ludicrous in that which appealed to his hidden pride and self-importance. She was too sceptical of virtue, to believe in the honesty of his devotion, and where Naomi had painted a halo, she detected the fastenings of a mask. Each one according to her disposition, had

erred in her judgment, though Marcia had closely grazed the truth. She was mistaken only in thinking that Jonas was conscious of his own hypocrisy. The idea of appointing him her own especial confessor and spiritual adviser, had flashed across her mind with the spontaneity of genius. She had trembled to venture upon its suggestion, and had been amazed at the voracity with which it was swallowed. Was it possible that so absolute a dolt existed! Vistas of interest expanded before her, and Armway assumed a rakish air of pleasure. That very night, she wrote to her father that her aunt had entreated her to extend her visit, and that she deemed it to be her duty to do so.

It was on the following morning, that the particular cry of "Naomee," "Naomee," which was mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, had echoed throughout the house. Soon the hustling tramp of the boys, in the halls and down the carpetless stairs, announced the advent of breakfast. A hungry lot they were. Not even the disfavor and actual consternation expressed upon the acidulous countenance of Mrs. Clenton could stay their avidity, or chill their fervor. Great piles of soggy smoking biscuits, more fitting food for a Gatling gun than for mortal stomach, disappeared as though they were the most fragile of pastry ; and the demand for a highly odoriferous preparation of corned beef exceeded the supply. Mrs. Clenton sat at the head of the table, surrounded by chipped earthenware which might have contained the rations of Noah's sons during their voyage to Ararat. Like an elderly Hebe about to strike for more wages, she reluctantly dispensed from the broken stem of a blue and white coffee pot, whose cover was secured by a piece of pink tape, the delectable fluid whose savory fumes made the young Christian Arab

student who had been sent hither to receive the benefits of a higher civilization, homesick; and whose pungency and flavor she frequently modified by a dash of pure hot water. In and out of the door, leading into the kitchen, passed and repassed Naomi; her sleeves rolled up above the dimples of her elbows, revealing her pretty white arms, as comely and as clear as is fleece after a bath in the brook, with here and there flecks of flour upon them. Her face was flushed with the blaze of the cooking; and around her head a handkerchief was bound, from beneath which a few moist curls had escaped, and were reposing within the swell of her neck.

Suddenly the clamor of laughter and the clatter of dishes ceased, as Marcia entered, and slowly and indolently glided down the room to her seat by her aunt's side. Every movement redounded with the grace that knows no concern nor premeditation. Her little feet twinkled beneath the diaphanous snow of her draperies discreetly foreshadowing her shapeliness, and then shyly retreating. The lace that clung to her bosom, ignorant of the envy its inert happiness inspired, exposed a glimpse of pearly shoulders as she bent in salutation. She seemed to be the embodiment of seductive simplicity. Every attribute was so chaste, so refined, so pure; yet her eyes were so brilliant with crystaline dew, and her lips were so crimson.

Marcia," said George looking up from a vast bowl of oatmeal, and milk that was melancholy in its blueness, which he was rapidly assimilating, "It don't seem to me that there is any reasonable cause for all this anxiety of the United States government over the decay of the navy, and the lack of available seamen."

"Now what extraordinary nonsense are you going to

utter, you silly boy. You quite startle one with your abruptness. You should have a bell, and ring it thrice, and thus give us time to prepare for a shock," she replied, smiling celestially upon him, as angels smile when they witness a generous act, and noting with satisfaction the dangerous dance of his eyes sparkling with suppressed fun.

Mrs. Clenton sighed with relief and glanced approvingly about her board. She earnestly commended any attempt towards serious conversation. It conferred an air of dignity and scholarly reserve, and it stifled hunger. Laughter acted too directly upon the gastric nerves. She would rather have none of it. Besides she considered that loud expressions of hilarity within the house of one whose lamented husband had been a pillar of the church, and who had in her own feeble way striven to befit herself for heavenly wedlock, were unseemly and sinful. So she welcomed this unwonted seriousness in George as a sign, perhaps, of a change of heart.

"Why," continued George looking towards his dish, "Even we could supply the naval department with lots of skippers, and not miss 'em."

Shouts and roars of mirth arose from the boys who in union found courage. The lines of the widow's face deepened and grew more tense; and a shrewish fire shot from her eyes, which usually slept in a cod-fishy composure. Her false teeth clicked as she pressed her tongue against them in the preliminary labors of her reproof. Yet as she remembered the regular remittances with which Dorne's father rewarded her faithfulness, she pursed her lips more tightly together, and hurried with her coffee-pot out of the room; and the boys whom she served upon her return had "grounds" to regret

their ill-timed audacity. Marcia's laughter rippled like the music of vibrating glass. She knew that its merriment was contagious, so she prolonged it. She had watched her cousin through the open door, and had keenly enjoyed the mortification that clouded her face. She realized that her presence and participation in the jest had intensified it, and this thought filled her with joy. Besides she stood in wholesome awe of her aunt, who had already given her as an unsought gift, what she called a "dressing down"; and she was pleased with George's fearlessness.

Her attraction towards him increased. How roguish he was and how potent was his drollery! She was sitting beside him at the table, and, as he rolled back in his chair exhausted with the violence of his enjoyment, she felt his careless pressure upon her. She timidly touched him with the tip of her slipper. He glanced toward her, and as he did so his eyelids opened widely with an almost defiant boldness. The power of its challenge made the hot blood surge through her cheeks, and scorched them as though they had been blistered by a tropical sun. She quickly drew back; and George, turning away, resumed with stolidity those feats of mastication, in which, like his friends the ancient Greeks, he excelled. She was disquieted, and she despised herself because this was so. She had weaved a spell, and had been caught within its meshes. In the presence of his uncouthness she lost her mental equilibrium. With more haste than her elegance required, she left the room which she had entered with the tranquillity of superiority; and in the seclusion of her own apartment she strove to calm the ranging emotions that so combated her pride.

CHAPTER VII.

NAOMI, dressed in her plain suit of gray whose neatness would have stirred the emulation of a quakeress, with a bunch of violets budding and expiring beneath her throat, passed down the broad street under the towering elms. She had escaped for an afternoon from her eternal thraldom, and though she was only on her way to perform certain missions for her mother, her heart beat in quickening pulsations with the joy of so unusual a liberty. The timid flowers that symbolized her nature in their delicacy and trust, she had plucked from the only useless spot within the grim old garden which surrounded her home. All else was devoted to the cultivation of product, none of which, it is unnecessary to state astonished the boys with its freshness, but invariably became grist for the insatiable mill of the great city. This little flower-bed was a relic of the mild sentimentalism of her father, who had planted it years before, and had watered it with his tears. And the fact that it would probably cost more to uproot it than the resulting profits would warrant, had caused his widow to preserve it in loving memory. It had always been a chosen retreat for Naomi, who had carefully tended it during the moments which she stole from her set tasks. For it seemed to her that the gentle plants partook of the properties of that dead parent whom she had never seen, but who, she believed, would, if his

sensibilities could have withstood the dash of disaster, have loved and cherished her. At her approach they shook away the dew-drops, and reared their fragile stems, and caressed her with the essence of their aroma.

The silence was the hush of an all-pervading voice, as she walked along. And the click, click, of her tiny heels seemed to be the unwelcomed herald of an intruder. The white houses, square as had been the principles of their makers, brooded in dignified retirement from the road, behind the protecting shrubbery. Not a green blind was thrown open, but all were tightly drawn as though the wind and the sunlight were as dangerous foes as had been the lurking red Indians to the log cabins that had preceded them. On the left hand, stretched away the broad expanse of the campus, that spot most sacred to the boys; bounded by the fences, cleanly with white-wash, in the rear of these stately old dwellings, by the grimy rows of small dun-colored buildings which comprised the "Commons," where those of the students who desired lodgings utterly devoid of comfort and conveniences could be satisfactorily accommodated, and by the dark wooded elevation known throughout the country far and near as the "Mountain," which extended away for miles and miles, a wilderness of thick underbrush and of tall pines and hemlocks, until it capped the clouds near the edge of the horizon.

The Academy campus was an institution at Armway which derived its interest and influence from age alone, and which could not have been furnished ready made. For there are certain qualities that money cannot purchase for mushroom colleges and schools. Minerva sprang full grown from the head of Jove; but time has always been the most skilful builder of her temples.

Around this spot, which was essentially their own, the boys had built a high wall of imagination and tradition; and he who dared to o'er leap it in derision, courted the fate of Remus. Here their feet trod upon their native heath. Here it was that their great victories had been achieved and their defeats pluckily sustained. Here the famous "rushes" had occurred, when the opposing masses of stalwart young manhood had crushed together in gigantic pressure, and, when one side had sullenly yielded its footing, had separated into groups engaged in hand to hand conflicts which had strewn its sacred sward with the shreds of clothing. Here their heroes had accomplished those deeds of "Dering-do," which were immortalized in class histories and poems. And here it was, when the sun in its dying glory was tinging with the touch of autumn the towering pines upon the wooded hills, and the long lined shadows lay thickly upon the field weaving and inter-weaving like the crossings of an etcher's needle, when the breeze stole up from the river cooled by the breath of the dewy daisies upon its banks, and the great red moon slowly climbed its first ascent, that the boys would gather, squatting like Indians around a camp fire, or lying at full length upon its gentle bosom; and the merry jest and tale would pass from one to another, and the old songs would be sung again, those songs that exhaled friendship and love and revelry, that vivified the memories of the campus and extolled its traditions.

Besides it was their palladium and their sanctuary. It was the undoubted belief of all that within its precincts, the local authorities were as powerless as was the constabulary of London, in the days of Nigel of Glenvarloch, within the wild confines of Alsatia; that the fence

marked the jurisdiction of the village; and that once over it, the fugitive student could with impunity deride his pursuers, as he was then only amenable to academical discipline. Nor was this belief impressed solely upon the minds of the boys; it was also the common report and understanding of the township; and the selectmen would have debated long and earnestly, and would have exhausted all mediation through the faculty, before they would have ordered their formidable "posse comitatus" to violate its privileges. And certain it is that the boys would have resisted so impious an invasion with all of the ardor that actuated their forefathers in repudiating the impost upon tea, or that frenzies priests in averting a sacrilege. For once, when a great pile of abandoned straw mattresses had been thoroughly saturated with kerosene oil, and under the security of a starless night had been arranged in a classic pyre in the rear of the Academy, and the torch had been applied, and the villagers in the valley below seeing the shooting flames through its windows had concluded that the building was burning, and the bells had excitedly clanged, and the independent fire company had intrepidly dragged their heavy machine to the brow of the hill, only to be greeted by cat-calls and ironical expressions of advice from the domains of the commons; then, when they had indignantly rushed upon the campus, and had scattered the deceiving brands, the school cry had shrilly resounded upon the astounded air, and great strife had arisen, and banger and trumpet had crossed to the damage of many a poll, as is to this day related both by the gossips of the "Daown taown tavern", and by the historians and bards of the Academy.

A narrow path led within its borders, along the whit-

ened fences, and connected the roadways at either end; and the use of this was by courtesy extended to the families of the members of the faculty, and to ladies.

But it was the unwritten law, as firmly founded as is Britannia's Constitution, that no "Townie," as the youth of the village were termed, and especially that no "Theologue" should set foot upon its sacred soil. For between the boys of the Academy and the students of the Theological Seminary, as bitter and intense a hatred existed, as ever armed aristocrats and helots. Perhaps the use of the preposition "Between" in the preceding sentence is disingenuous, since it indicates that both parties were actuated by this passion. The former, certainly, vaunted their vindictiveness; but the latter repudiated any emotion stronger than an ever present sense of mild and contemptuous superiority. Now the boys despised those traits of character which are most aptly described by the adjectives "meek and lowly." It was seldom that one of them announced his intention of fitting himself for the career of a clergyman; yet the future lots that fate would throw for them were fertile subjects of discussion, and the merits and demerits of all other professions were actively canvassed. But when an unfrequent voice was raised in support of the most holy of callings, it generally emanated from a weak vessel of the namby-pamby, milk-and-water type, whose energies were exhausted in the struggles of riding the waves of life. Unfortunately a catarrhal cough and religion seemed to them to be as intimately connected as are cause and effect. Besides, at Armway, the Theologues were social favorites and the boys were not. They were the rulers of decorous feasts, and the heroes of reading circles, where they complacently received as their rightful tribute the homage of earnest young girls, who,

like Naomi, were stimulated by ideality. They were boarded at reduced rates, and not on account of their immateriality either, for their hunger was ever an apt simile for magnitude; and sometimes even they were allowed to balance this by services rendered in the line of carving and asking grace. They received eleemosynary aid also, and collection plates were passed for their benefit, and the ladies' sewing club forestalled the severity of winter for them by timely contributions of warm socks and mufflers. Then, too, the susceptible maidens of the village and the Female Seminary sighed for their gentle addresses, while they scorned the boorishness of the boys of the Academy. For in the eyes of the school-mistress, whose father before her had plenteously endowed the house of God's workers upon the hill, and who had eventually disposed of her own thrifty savings through the same fathomless channel to grace, the Theologue, like the mute of the harem, could do no harm, while the boys could. She avoided the latter, as the shepherd does the ravening wolves; but the former were as acceptable as are trusty watch-dogs. Besides the abnormal is generally contemned, unless it has awesome qualities; and the boys did not understand the Theologues. There was no character in the classics of similitude to them, unless it was Thersites; and even he pretended to be a warrior. They were so sombre, and subdued, and chary of exercise, so given to long hair and meditation, and folding of hands and rolling of eyes, that while they disdained them they were still half envious of them. Finally they regarded them as their natural enemies, the friends of their deadly foes, the landladies and the faculty, the spies upon their mischief and the instigators of their enforced devotions, and so they hated them.

Now Naomi thoroughly understood these prejudices. She appreciated the boys' ridiculous attachment to tradition and their unreasoning antipathy to their saintly elders, as well as she knew her honest little self. It was therefore with unfeigned anxiety and dismay, that, as she turned into the campus path at its upper extremity, she saw slowly advancing towards her from its furthest point, the tall, striking figure of Jonas Chidsy.

He had spent a most wretched night of wakefulness, tossed like a rudderless barque by the waves of passion, and then swept and beaten by the rain of contrition. The soothing monotony of his life at Armway had been pierced through and through by bright glances, and had suffered an utter collapse. His thoughts, from their dreamy wanderings had been gathered and concentrated upon a single object, and that was Marcia. He had pictured her in the softest and noblest of colors. He had burned with impatience to help her spiritual nature, by exhibiting to her its own matchless purity. He had dreamt that she might prove to him a sister, comforting him with the calm strength of sisterly affection. He had recalled how men of eminent learning and piety had often formed these soulful and sexless intimacies that had riveted twin spirits with bolts which were mightier than steel. He had instanced how Petrarch had been solaced by Laura, and how the memory of Beatrice had inspired Dante. He had fancied her as far removed and severed from the muck and dross of earth, as are the ethereal flames that illuminate Paradise. And yet ever amid these thoughts, would steal the entrancing vision of her actual loveliness with its womanly curves and electric warmth, and the joyous promise of its presence. Those ardent orbs would again glow with a tenderness and entice with a suggestion that belied

all remembrance of her speech. And then he had moaned aloud, and had beaten his chest with his fists as if to exorcise the mocking devil that possessed him, and had prayed to her innocence to forgive the unwitting degradation which he had inflicted. And so he had pitched to and fro, like a ship whose anchorage had been so prolonged that its cables had rotted and parted and cast it adrift at the mercy of wind and tide.

And when morning had dawned, and had brought action to his restlessness, he had rambled forth, dazed and uncertain, conscious of no settled purpose, yet conscious that he would seek her. Heretofore his walks had never led him towards the Academy. He detested the noise and the manner of the boys ; for they always tormented him with their scoffings, and he avoided them. Hence he had strolled in other directions, along the river bank or through the fields or within the quiet woods. Until the terror of a certain incident had caused him to shun its vicinity, as he would the barque of Charon, he has frequently sought the shady dells and lonely heights of the " Mountain " ; but now he viewed it even from afar with fright.

He was aware of no tradition nor rule which forbade his use of the campus ; and he had listlessly entered upon it without much appreciation of whither he was going. He was thinking of Marcia, thinking how long the time had been since he had parted with her, and how wasted were the years that had known her not. His reverie was so deep and so restricting that he did not heed nor hear the shouts at first faint and distant, and then growing louder and nearer, of " Theologue on the campus," " Theologue on the campus." Nor did he note the resounding echoes of rapidly approaching feet, until he was aroused to the sternness of present realities by a sharp

blow upon the back, which caused him to turn quickly aside and in his confusion to trip over a large flat stone, which had formerly been used as a base upon the ball field, but which modern appliances had relegated to ignominious abandonment. He fell upon his knees, and gazed in bewilderment upon a gyrating ring of crazy boys who danced excitedly around him. The blow which he had received had been inflicted by the accurate throwing by George Dorne of a parcel of books which were bound tightly together with a long strap that he had used as a sling.

"Boys, it's Jonas Chidsy!"

"Ah there! Chid, you're a kid!"

"Hello, Jonah, are you on your way to Nineveh again?"

"He'll be fired up before he's three days here!"

"Next time you go a sailing, Jonah, you'd better take a brad-awl and stomach pump along."

These were a few of the ejaculations, which permit repetition, that stormed upon his ears. Jonas slowly picked himself together, and stood in silence before them; his glasses broken, his hat missing, his hair waving in the wind in dishevelled ringlets, and his coat covered with fragments of soil and with dust. In the settling flood of faces that still dashed before him, but one branded itself upon his memory, and that was the face of Dorne. Each eye radiated his jeering smile, each exclamation re-echoed his sarcasms. He knew instinctively that it was he who had struck him; and a rush of recollections now recalled the petty annoyances to which this boy had subjected him since he had entered the seminary, and the taunt and the jest with which he had ever greeted him. And he realized that within his heart, bitter hatred, which had smould-

ered for a long time unnoticed, now burned fiercely towards him. He felt the hot blood surge beneath his cheeks, and anger so enflame his gaze that the landscape blurred and faded.

That old savage desire to strike, to exert his virility and strength, and to ruthlessly destroy, which had so overcome him when he was a boy, returned to him. His fists fiercely clinched, his muscles tightened like thongs upon a slave struggling to escape from his captors, he advanced one step. Then he thought of the dignity and eminence of his calling, of that priesthood so consecrated, so set apart and removed from vulgar strife. Was it through brawling that he would induce men to seek a nobler life? Was this the method of teaching by the force of holy precept and example that had been inculcated within him? How could he with clear accent and conscience answer "Adsum" to the roll of his class if he had laid aside the robes of peace? These silent questions arrested his wrath and he again stood motionless and speechless.

"For shame! boys, for shame!" cried a sweet ringing voice. "So many against one, and he a servant of God, unused to contention! George Dorne, is this the knightly chivalry of which you boast? Will Mason, is this the way in which you emulate your hero Wallace? Oh, shame has come upon me because of my pride in you all! Little did I think that the Academy could produce such a pack of cowards!"

Thus spake Naomi, who had quickened her steps as soon as she had recognized Jonas and had heard the fateful shouts, and she straightway passed to his side, standing like a buckler-bearer, a trifle in advance, with heart as resolute and single of purpose as that which beat within the breast of Scotia's heroine, who suckled

her immured and starving prince. The boys shrank away abashed and covered with confusion, for they all loved her and valued her approbation, and each in his boyish way had often bragged to her of his gallantry and prowess, and had confided how earnestly he yearned for an opportunity to perform deeds of valor. As she turned towards Jonas, her face beamed with enthusiasm :

"I cannot express," she said, "my admiration for your Christian forbearance. You have realized for me the possibilities of martyrdom, and have proven how sufficient and enduring is our faith in time of trial."

Now Jonas had been undergoing the gnawing pangs of mortification. To be so maltreated, and then to be rescued by the mediation of a young girl, had exceeded the bitterness of death. His enthralling introspection had been concentrated upon his appearance. How had he borne himself? Had his manner been undignified? Had the situation been ridiculous? What would people say when they heard of his misadventure? These were the queries that were agitating him, when her words greeted him. His existence had been so solitary and so selfish, that his own chances and fortunes were far more important and interesting to him than ever could be those of another. And as Marcia's soft flatteries had delighted and befooled him, and as George's laugh and taunts had unduly moved him, so now Naomi's tones of unqualified veneration mollified his perturbed spirits and cheered him. She surely must be his good angel. He remembered now that Sunday morning when he had been designated to deliver his laboriously prepared theme in the chapel, and self-consciousness had alarmed him with a nervousness that presaged utter failure, when his limbs were trembling

beneath him and his tongue was cleaving unto the roof of his mouth, that his eyes had met and rested upon hers, and that, in their steady confidence, he had found encouragement and fortitude. He remembered that he had always glanced towards her as he had entered the auditorium, and that, as he had seen her bending reverently over the back of the old-fashioned pew before her, he had experienced an indefinite satisfaction in her proximity. He remembered that he had always distinguished her voice in the recital of the Creed, and that its tones had impressed him, they were so pure and so redolent with prayer and with fervor. He remembered too the many comforts that had been woven for him, and which like his associates he had gratefully accepted from the sewing circle, and that her card had always been modestly hid within them. She had never been a positive personality to him, nor had she occupied his thoughts, nor influenced his dreams ; but now the earnestness of her face, and the sympathetic touch of her hand upon his arm, recalled these scattered recollections and firmly connected them with her. So he plumed himself upon hearing these laudatory words, and his heart expanded towards one who so thoroughly understood him. And, as they were now proceeding unmolested down the path, he replied :

"There was nothing else for me to do. Surely the moments of our life are too fleeting to be wasted in quarrel and riot. I feel for those misguided boys as I would towards a younger brother, for I too can say 'Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do.'" As his impious hypocrisy complacently evolved this comparison a sudden twinge of pain shooting through his back, reminded him that if they did not, he did pos-

sess a very present sense of what they had done, and heightened the bland melancholy of his expression.

Naomi was enraptured. She was actually walking by the side of the one whom she had secretly worshipped and whom she now found to be invested with all of those exalted qualities which her fervid imagination had ascribed to him. The shadow of her cousin's perfidy vanished in the sunlight of his presence. Her feet scarcely pressed the sward, she tripped along with such buoyancy of spirit. She felt that she had surmounted the summit of felicity. Alas! poor child! She did not appreciate that a summit forbids continued existence; since the rarity of its atmosphere quickly exhausts vitality; and that the descent is irksome and full of danger.

Jonas, on his part was unusually at ease. None of the feverish anxiety that had attended his meeting with Marcia, and had ever since burned within him, was now perceptible. Naomi conversed brightly and heartily with him, selecting those subjects that she judged were of most interest to him, such as the state of the Church, the true method of giving alms, and his future. He told her how he loved to think of the quiet home that awaited him in some small country parish, where, secluded from the turmoil of the world, sheltered from its vulgar cares, and nurtured by the affection of his flock, he could peruse the gilded book of life and slowly turn its shining pages. She sympathized with him in his modest ambition, and sighed as she contemplated its delicious repose and peace, not appreciating the intense egoism that was the sole architect and moulder of his plans.

How little we really know of each other, and how largely our supposed acquaintance depends upon extraneous circumstances! She saw this young man of

his own volition adopt the calling which demands the highest attributes. She assumed at once that love of God and of his fellows was his supreme and only motive. She could not unveil his gloomy boyhood, his lurking ferocity, his morbid timidity and sloth, his pampered aestheticism, and his childish enjoyment of music and colors and robes. She could not divine that he was so wealthy as to be entirely relieved from the necessity of provision, that he was utterly ignorant of the attachments of home, and that the force of early association and circumstances had inclined his heart towards the Seminary. He was well and properly made, and clad in a garb that was romantic in its oddity ; and he bore with dignity all of the outward signs of one who had been called to be a shepherd of men. The sickly sentimentality, the moroseness, the selfishness, of the natural man, was screened by clerical dress and speech, and in no wise revealed. She poured forth her pure young soul to him in all of its virginal freshness ; and so soothed him by her friendliness and almost reverent respect, that he forgot the mission which he had so aimlessly undertaken. He retraced his steps, walking with her as far as her destination would permit, and when he regretfully left her, departed with his former serenity completely restored, his mental poise and equilibrium fully balanced by the magic of sincere adulation.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was very peaceful down by the river's bank. The softly flowing waters barely murmured. The path was well shaded by the towering warriors of the forest, which had withstood the assault of the fire and steel, that had accompanied the advent of nature's destroyer, the white man; the wasting yet kindly decay of the elements, and the mordant touch of time. Upon fine Sundays, after morning service, this was the chosen resort for the residents of Armway. Here came the young maidens and matrons in all of the bravery of their finery; the young men in the uncomfortable stiffness of holiday attire; and the fathers and mothers who had borne the heat and the burden, bursting with cackling reminiscences and delighting to recall their trials, as one who has undergone a major surgical operation, takes melancholy pride in recounting the chill of the knife and the grate of the saw. It was pleasant to stroll here in the sunlight, which, though tempered in its vehemence by the assuaging foliage, still retained its cherishing fecundity. Sometimes a lark, as if challenging the stars, would shoot forth from the osiers and chant the triumph of its swiftness in the almost invisible heights of the sky. Sometimes from the grim old forest, whose gloom was perpetuated by the fruitful lap of the waters, an eagle would arise, and, lazily poised in mid air with arrogance

of invulnerability, would shadow their ripples with its wings. But upon Saturday afternoons, the walk was deserted. The boys were engaged with their sports upon the campus ; and the villagers were still engrossed with the toil of the week. For the first principle engrafted within them had been that man must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. And truth had engraven it upon the original escutcheon of the settlement. Ease was confined within the narrow interstices that separated the services of the Sabbath, and was never permitted to escape. So the youth in the fields viewed with dismay the ever-extending length of the furrow, and the impotent bite of the plow ; yet they plodded on behind the straining horses. And the maidens, through the dairy window, watched with impatience the sluggish descent of the sun ; yet their busy hands never flagged in activity. And Marcia and Jonas strolled together in solitude.

He had dreaded to meet her ; yet had yielded to the voice of secret inclination masquerading as duty, and had found her a willing companion. She had indeed expected him upon the previous day. She had been chagrined when she had learned of his adventure with Naomi ; and she had firmly resolved that she would as speedily as possible cut short this intimacy, whose sudden increase had so colored with joy her cousin's cheek. Since fortune seemed to fight against her, she would match chance with wit. In the outset, she talked to him solely about herself. She told him that she had been reared in a different faith from that which was taught in the Seminary ; but that since her arrival in Armway she had become a proselyte of it. She questioned him anxiously regarding her soul's salvation, and appeared to be deeply reassured by his words of confidence in the certain blissfulness of her hereafter, since

she had sought and found the only true church and gateway to heaven.

"My father is such a good man. He is charitable and faithful to his duty, and obedient to holy ordinance. He believes as fully in his creed as we do in ours. Will he not be saved?"

"All things are possible in the mercy of God," replied Jonas dubiously.

"And there was my mother! She died when she was very young; and dear little cousin Jimmie, who could not have known the significance of sin, and yet neither of them was baptized."

"The Fathers all agree that baptism is essential to salvation," said Jonas, as with the air of an Aristides he consigned to outer darkness the fair young bride, whom death had robbed of such happiness, and "dear little cousin Jimmie," whom the pangs of a fortnight had sufficed to exhaust.

"And can we enjoy felicity while they are in agony?"

"Are not the angels happy who have for ages witnessed the myriads of lost souls writhing in ceaseless torture? Is not God love? And yet does He not so ordain? Death endues us with different natures, and with emotions that are now foreign to us. Earth will become as indifferent to us, as is the cocoon to the butterfly. The ties of this world are sinful, and they then have no binding force. Eternal justice governs, although we are so blinded by human prejudices that we cannot perceive it. But since we are numbered among the elect we must so believe. The light of the great white Throne will make it manifest."

"Your words anoint me with the hallowed oil of faith," murmured Marcia, as with the delicate web of her kerchief she pressed from her eyes, that shone the

brighter for their pious sympathy, a tribute of grief over the fate of her benighted kindred.

Her interest was of course simulated, and she heeded his sayings no more than she would the ravings of a dervish. She had been compelled by her agreement with him to engage him in a conversation upon religious topics; for this was the purpose of their meeting. It now accomplished a twofold result. Jonas, warmed by the enfolding robes of his bigotry, became complacent and serene. And the intensity of dislike which the brutality of his dogmas inspired within her, nerved her to the execution of her designs against him. She presently changed the drift of their colloquy somewhat, and told him of her many trials, how her father had insisted upon her visiting her aunt in order that she might aid her, how good a woman was Mrs. Clenton, so industrious, so self-sacrificing, and how she loved to help her, and yet how hard it was for her to be thrown into association with so many rough, coarse boys.

"Still I presume that your cousin Naomi is a powerful auxiliary to her mother. She is renowned far and near as a most dutiful daughter."

"An auxiliary," repeated Marcia with a bitter laugh, and a sarcastic gleam under her long sweeping lashes that curled upwards at the ends like the tendrils of a rare aquatic plant, "Undoubtedly her fascinations entice and captivate the boys; but—Oh what am I saying, Mr. Chidsy! Cannot you perceive how much I need advice and admonition! Teach me that charity that thinketh no evil! And yet, my blood boils with honest indignation when I consider the unfilial conduct of some daughters."

She laid her little ungloved hand upon his sleeve, and looked into his face with the beseeching candor of a child.

She saw his countenance twitch and his lips quiver with emotions which he with difficulty restrained; and yet she only pressed her hand more firmly, and more bewitchingly gazed upon him.

"Do not chasten yourself with such severity, my dear Miss Clenton. You are over sensitive, and your balance between the right and the wrong discriminates too closely. Hair-breadths are disregarded by Christianity. The truth is not uncharitable; for it is a living fact, and should always be spoken. If your cousin is an undutiful daughter you should not hesitate to proclaim it. Indeed it is your duty to do so; for she must be a whited sepulchre, she presents so attractive an exterior."

And Jonas sighed, as he remembered her flattering deference that had so encouraged him.

"You make the straight and narrow path so evident to me, that my feet should never stray. It must be wrong for me to allow her deceptions to continue. I feel this especially, when I remember her cruel words regarding you this morning. Oh, Mr. Chidsy, how can she treat her poor old mother so! How can she frolic with the boys, when she knows how oppressive is the burden upon that feeble old back! Ah, if I only had such a mother, how happy would I be to cherish and to relieve her! And I try, as it is; but I am not strong, and I am so unaccustomed to work. Yet I do help her, believe me. And she is most grateful, it seems so strange to her to receive any consideration. See, I have nearly ruined my hands!" and Marcia piteously held before him her little palm as rosy as the sleep of an infant.

"You are very good to be of such assistance," rejoined Jonas; "and the contrast reflects shame upon

your cousin. But tell me what was it that she said concerning me. Not that I am unduly inquisitive; but it will enable me to more unerringly scan her character. I met her yesterday, under trying and untoward circumstances, and she seemed to be most kind and considerate to me."

"Yes, that detestable George Dorne, for I must so term him, he is so impudent, related this morning at the breakfast table how shamefully you had been abused, and my eyes welled with tears as I listened to his wicked mocking words. But they all laughed, oh, so heartily, and none so merrily as did Naomi, when he said—it humiliates me to repeat such vulgarity—that she and you should have exchanged clothing."

Poor Jonas! he flushed with the hot blood of contumely. All of the self-assurance, which had so rapidly developed within the preceding days, vanished like a spectre suddenly exposed to a searching light. Again past his vision flashed the sneering face of George, with its hateful smirk. Why was it that this boy continually unsettled his mental calm? Why was he always so light and joyous and free from all embarrassments, a miserable, stupid, half grown lout, halting at the *pons-asinorum* in dismay, overthrown by the galloping muse of the Latin poet, to whom the English language was and ever would be an unknown tongue; and yet successfully ridiculing him, with his fine mind, his high culture, and all of his intellectual attainments! Oh, it was beyond endurance! Very unholy were the thoughts, very unclerical were the utterances that rushed through his mind and hesitated upon his lips. Must it always be that he should suffer ignominy and contempt, and still remain meek and silent under it? Was this the peace that passed all understanding? Had he bartered

the right that birth had given to him, to be manly and aggressive and commanding, for a mess of pottage compounded of refinement and seclusion? Why had he not heeded the warnings of his father's cold unsympathetic life? Why had he, a young man, endowed with vigor, enriched by ancestral thrift, and unencumbered by tie or restriction, deliberately thrust his head into the noose, his neck beneath the pillory? For the first time since he had entered the Seminary did he now question the wisdom of his course. And all of these regrets and doubtings and soul-rending sensations swept like a victorious army over him, and enthralled his mind with a rapidity that was almost instantaneous in point of time.

He felt that he was changed, but he was only aroused. His real nature had been so repressed, so stifled by his environments that he had never appreciated the trend of his desires. He had wandered through life in the twilight of constraint, and when the blaze of freedom had shone upon him, the blink and the glare had bewildered him. He had been bound, hand and foot, by the chains of parental submission, inherited influences, and the force of daily habit and custom; and when the clamps had broken and the shackles had been unloosed he had again bound himself. Knowledge of life and knowledge of his true self was now being pressed upon him, unprepared and unwilling though he was to receive it.

One force he recognized as straining at the vitals of his being, and that was an ever-increasing hatred of George. The mention of that name heated and pulsated his blood. He hated him for what he was, and for what he himself had never been. He envied him his nature, and he charged him with his own dreary youth

and the pleasures which were forever lost to him. There had always been a well-spring of bitterness in his soul; but he had covered it with the rushes and soil of monotonous habitude. Now it bubbled forth, and as the lava wantonly destroys the painful labor of the husbandmen at the mountain's base, so it consumed the product of his schooling and of his studies. He conceived that he had forfeited his manhood, and had become emasculated; that he was now only fitted to be a butt for a boy, or a trustworthy and proper companion for a blooming young maiden.

There was also another influence at work within him, whose insidious poison, though stealing through every vein, though tingling each nerve, and though impelling and augmenting his ineffectual regrets, he did not as yet fully recognize. The calm friendliness that had attended his walk and chat with Naomi, had upon his meeting with Marcia straightway deserted him. The spell of her personality, her absorbing femineity, the swish of her drapery against him, and the infinitesimal and occasional contacts of their bodies, affected him to his marrow. He was nervous and agitated, and stunned by abnormal thoughts, and battered with insane longings; and it was only through the combined powers of his will that he had been able to maintain the Pharasaical formalism of his carriage and speech.

This instant of self-revelation seemed to be interminable to Jonas. The necessity of immediate control and dissembling oppressed him. He knew what he should say, but his tongue faltered in confusion. What must Marcia think of his moody contemplation? Had he been guilty of inexcusable inadvertence? He glanced towards her, half expecting to read in her face an expression of amazement at his self-abstraction. But she

appeared to be contentedly awaiting his response, and to be not in the least disturbed by his taciturnity. So he constrained himself to speak, though he paled beneath the effort, and the hot blood turned back into his heart and accelerated its throbbings.

"How trivial are the woes of ridicule in comparison with the hopes of eternity! Most willingly would I promote their mirth, were it free from guile; but I am grieved, deeply grieved, that one so young, with so candid a brow as your cousin, should be so deceitful."

"I cannot tell you how shocked I have been as I have daily gained a more certain perception of her character. She is imbued with malice. When I came to Armway, I regarded with delight the prospect of finding in her a dear little sister, in whom I could confide, whose thoughts and purposes would be in accord with mine. But dreadful has been the awakening from the bright dreams of my simplicity. Would you believe that my deepest preferences and most sacred aspirations have been mercilessly exposed by her to that same ridicule which you so nobly ignore! Such perfidy seems to be incredible; yet what I relate is true. Ah, there was a secret stab in the jests concerning you, which was thrust at me, and it wounded me most deeply!"

Hardly had Marcia uttered this sentence than she started as if from the realization of self-betrayal. She colored as do the roses before the vernal heat, and a charming agitation suffused her eyes.

"And will you not tell me how that could be?" inquired Jonas, bending over her in the anxiety of conflicting doubts and hopes.

"Pray do not ask me, Mr. Chidsy; I have said far too much," she cried, as she furtively scrutinized him behind the modest veiling of her lashes.

Another wave of revulsion swept over him! Could it be possible that this fair young girl, fresher and sweeter than the blossom of a peach or the bloom of the trailing arbutus, had formed an affection for him, and in her innocence had divulged it to her cousin? Was fate, which he had but now so derided, so beneficent to him, as to incline toward him the chaste and undefiled heart of her, whose glance shook his strength, and the touch of whose garments penetrated his being? Were the heavens of joy spread open before him; and did he, who had been so bitter, so despondent and so self-compassionate, possess earth's richest gift?

They were standing beneath the shadow of a venerable elm, whose arms were extended far and wide, as if seeking to embrace and to strain to its rugged old breast the coy and fleeting atmosphere. The air was redolent with the breath of the pines and the perfume of the lily pads. Myriad atoms of insect vitality glowed and sparkled in the sunbeams that shot through the interlacing branches. The faint low of the kine browsing upon the further bank of the river mingled with the joyous song and twitter of the birds and the rippling music of the water's flow. All nature chanted the anthem of pervading love and union, of the universality of life, and of the joys of its begetting and continuance. Their bodies began to sway almost imperceptibly, as if attracted by a mutual magnetism. A thousand lights danced before his vision. His head grew heavy and dizzy. An unthought impulse urged him forward, and drove out his will and resolution. He stretched forth his arms—when Marcia, who had steadfastly observed him, and had read each change of passion in his nervously twitching face, drew slowly away, and, in cold, distinct, indifferent tones of the utmost composure, said:

"Don't you think that we had best be homeward bound, Mr. Chidsy? It is so hot and stupid here."

She quietly strolled down the river path, and he in silence followed her. He no longer sought her side, but preserved a deferential distance behind her, hanging low his head with shame. Was he insane? he asked himself. Had all of the maddening emotions of the day no foundation save in the disorder of his mind? Had he imagined tenderness in those grave eyes, and mistaken the placidity of fortuitous friendship for love? Was even his hate the figment of unsettled fancy? Oh, double-dyed fool and egregious ass that he was, why should he not be a laughing-stock, since he was so bitter a jest unto himself! Vain, indeed, were his regrets that he had not chosen a more active life, when the slightest deviation from his ordinary pursuits aroused such disquietude within him. The even passage of his days of study and meditation had at least afforded him mental repose, and their decent reserve had protected him from folly. Again he resolved that he would be self-contained, and would wrap the cloak of austerity more closely about him. Again he summoned all of his energies to his assistance, and with a weighty expression of determination upon his face, denoting far more decision than he actually possessed, he rejoined Marcia.

"Can you tell me," he said, "who dwells in yonder little cottage? It is so tiny that it seems to be better adapted for a play-house than for the home of a laborer." He pointed to a small house of a single story in height, which set back from the path, half hidden by the huge pines that guarded it, and screened by ivy and honeysuckle. It presented an inviting prospect. A white gravelled walk led to the porch, which

was on a level with the adjoining flower beds. Through the low windows could be seen white curtains tastefully draped, and glimpses of engravings and bats and guns upon the walls.

"Why, don't you know, that is where George Dorne and his chum Will Mason live. He would not room in the Commons, nor at his boarding-house, though there he should be to fully profit by the restraints of its home influences; and he persuaded his father, who, I fear, is foolishly indulgent with him, to rear this diminutive nook. He calls it 'The Retreat'; but he says that the latch string always hangs out for his friends. My aunt, Naomi and I, for of course I would not have gone there alone for the world, visited the boys one day shortly after my arrival. I did not then appreciate the turpitude of George's nature; and they were so anxious to exhibit the beauties of their abode, that I consented to do so. It is really very pleasant. In front there is one large room, well lighted and yet well shaded, as you can see, which they use as a study, or at least they pretend that they do. From it a door leads into their sleeping apartment in the rear, which, my aunt says, for I would not enter it, is airy and commodious. These two rooms comprise the entire dwelling. It is arranged with a purity of taste far exceeding what one would expect from lads so uncouth as they. They have collected a great variety of curious odds and ends that they call 'Memorabilia,' with which they have decorated the walls and tables; and their furniture is awfully com fortable, though it is old and mutilated, and burned by cigarettes. There are great easy-chairs in which no one could possibly study; and the widest, sleepiest, dreamiest lounge, that you could imagine. Then too they have quantities of books scattered helter-skelter

about the room. But, oh, I was so saddened when I glanced over them! There were so many literal translations, and so many frivolities of fiction; but not one sensible serious work such as you and I love to peruse and consider, nor did I anywhere see the Bible, though I anxiously looked for it. I fear that George is a godless and sinful young man."

"He seems to belong to a perverse generation," replied Jonas, gently patting his hands together, as he thought with a certain complacency of his manifest waywardness.

They had now reached the village, and were approaching the rusty brick walls and cheerless windows of Mrs. Clenton's house.

"I shrank instinctively from him with dread and repugnance when I first saw him," continued Marcia, "he is so bold and so gross. Still, I tried to combat this feeling lest I might be unjust. But since I have heard his blasphemous speeches, I avoid him as I would a pestilence. Papa always taught me to seek the society of the good and of the pure of heart; and that is why I hope that we may repeat the communion of this afternoon very soon. For you have both helped and comforted me." And she proffered him her hand in the courtesy of farewell. Did his vagrant fancy again mislead him, or was his grasp returned by a deliciously soft and lingering pressure? He gazed eagerly into her face and again there read a mournful entreaty. Once more burning words leapt to his lips, and his flesh quivered as from palsy. He glanced towards the house, and there discovered at the window the sneering, laughing visage of George Dorne, who was pointing his finger derisively towards him, and was evidently amusing the other occupants of the room with choice witticisms at his expense.

"Doubtless Naomi is heartily enjoying his ridicule," he bitterly thought. He dropped her hand and abruptly started down the road, almost bursting with anger and hatred and passion, and longing to hide himself where none of his new acquaintances could ever find him, where he would he unmindful and forgetful of himself and of his thoughts. For he now knew how different he was from what he had ever considered himself to be, and he feared lest his ample robes should shrink and his hideousness become revealed. Grateful would be his former obscure and dreamy peacefulness. To regain it, to seek and to find the well-trodden way, and never again to stray therefrom, was now his ardent purpose. For Jonas looked into his heart, and was affrighted.

CHAPTER IX.

THE rooms in the Seminary building, in which the Theological students were lodged, were charming and quaint. They were old-fashioned and low studded, and the beams that bisected their ceiling were blackened by age. The windows set back in deep recesses, and their wide benches, when comfortably cushioned, invited pleasant contemplation or repose with attractive suggestions that were almost irresistible. The air that sighed through them was so invigorated by the juicy leaves and resinous boughs of the huge shadowing trees, that it seemed like partaking of a tonic to inhale it. The light that filtered through them was so mellow and opalescent, that it resembled the kisses with which Diana softly awakened the sleeping Endymion. And the view stretched away into an increasing expanse of delight, as richly diversified and as comprehensive as that which in olden time greeted the gaze of the Psalmist, when he lifted his eyes unto the hills. Bright and verdant and peaceful it lay, fair as the garden of the Hesperides save where the green of the campus deepened and dwindled into distance; for, towering over it, frowned the Mountain, dark and threatening, and saddening with its gloom the hues of its verdure, pathless and almost impenetrable, the same now as it had been in those yesterdays when the heaviest tread of man was the fleeting echo of the moccasin.

The Mountain was not beautiful, it was sublime. Around its brow obscurity clung, like a cowl to the head of a monk. It was the home of the thunder-cloud, the nurse of the storm. It never smiled ; but its laughter was the battle of the elements.

Like the Pyramids, it seemed to be ever meditating ; and its thoughts were the despicability of man, and the irony of his fate. Autumn with the golden touch of its fingers never lessened its severity ; for the bitterest frost grew with the night and wasted before the morrow's sun could mollify its harshness, and the tints of its sombreness were only intensified. It was the habitat of the wild-cat, whose unearthly shrieks would at times startle into fright the quiet of slumber. Little children hid their heads in terror within the comforting nests of their mother's laps, as winter tales of ferocious bears that prowled among its crags, the single blow of whose paw could fell an ox, were told around the brightly burning hickory logs of the ingle nook, while the winds of the north howled among the rafters in vain emulation. Then, too, in one of its rocky glens was the lair of the rattlesnake ; and again and anon, in the fervency of summer's heat, when the warmth of earth's bosom aroused all sluggishness, the housewife busy with the burnishing of her pans in the dairy, was terrified by the slimy sweep of its coils across her spotless floor. And in many a pent-up parlor, among the ornaments that bedecked its most highly reverenced and costly appendage of elegance, the etagere, commonly and indefinitely called in this vicinity the "what-not," whose motto is "Este profani," and whose approach is only open to the adult and then with hesitating footsteps and bated breath ; safely ensconced in some lacquered box brought by a missionary returning from India's coral strand, or

in the depths of a fabled china treasure which the tossings of the wave-beaten Mayflower had spared to become the seneschal of family pride, might be found its dread and mysterious rattles, trophies of later contests in which the seed of the woman had crushed the serpent's head.

So the villagers from their earliest associations, shunned the Mountain, with feelings akin to awe; and even the headlong spirits of the boys were tinged by a superstitious dread of its lower. Besides, the underbrush had so thickly tangled itself between the trees, and the heavy humid air was so dense and so teeming with numberless insects that their expeditions of sport and adventure avoided it, as entailing too much hardship and discomfort. So it reigned in solitude, protected by tradition and by grim reality.

To Jonas, the Mountain was a sentient monster, a brooding giant of evil. It was connected in his mind and memory with his first contemplation and realization of the awesome incidents that attend violent death. And this happened in this wise. It was shortly after his entrance into the Armway Seminary, that the long and lonely walk of a Saturday afternoon led him, upon his return along the outskirts of the easterly side of the Mountain, to him then known only as a massive piece of grandeur obtruded upon a scene of rural simplicity and prettiness. Its mighty hemlocks and pines were marshalled before him like an army of grenadiers repelling invaders. Inexorable rigor and pride, in a strength that had outworn the ages, stiffened their ranks. The silence was oppressive, and no sound challenged its dominion, save the grit and the crackle of the loam beneath his feet, the creaking of a lightning-shattered bough bemoaning its fate to the sighing sympathy of the

zephyr, and the distant and discordant cries of crows. Jonas could see these noisome creatures of darkness and ill-fortune encircling a projecting wing of the Mountain, which it was necessary for him to pass in order to reach his destination.

As he watched their rounding flight, which seemed to center upon some one particular object that was still invisible to him, as he listened to their caws incessant and growing louder and harsher as he approached, a fear without a name, without a reason seized him. His body shook with an involuntary tremor as though the hard heel of the peasant had pressed too heavily upon the sod which would be his winding-sheet; his flesh quivered as quivers all flesh before the chill of Azrael's breath; his eyes shot forth that look of trepidation which an unexpected rap, or fright in the night, or the fleeting sweep of a spectral footstep will produce. He felt that he was confronted by the great unknown, and it overwhelmed him. What was it that urged his pace with such zest, and yet caused it to drag and to halt? In what manner could his fate be entwined with these grewsome sounds upon this lonely mountain height? He could not tell, yet, as through the dim mists of pre-existence we sometimes recognize the faces of strangers and recall with familiarity scenes never before visited, so, with a divination as keen as is this retrospect, did Jonas know that some time, when doom was cracking, when the strain of life was tearing its fibres, he, and the crows and the sighing boughs and the frowning rocks would in fatality meet. So he knew for one instant, when the shudder froze within him vitality's tide, then and but then, through the rift in future's blackening clouds, did this pale sickly light appear, never again to

perturb his spirit, except through the tossings and moanings of nightmare.

A sudden swish through the air restored the present scene to his attention. Something ghastly, unspeakable, loathsome, swept his cheek with sticky nastiness, and spattered upon the ground at his feet. He looked above him. There, in the clearest blue of the ether, under as cloudless a sky as gladdened the morning of the Ascension, two crows, like twin Harpies besetting a hapless stranger, were screaming and clawing and biting. He glanced upon the earth, and there before him, on him—oh, horror! what portent of unutterable evil was thus presaged! what shapeless fragment, plucked by hell's messengers, of discolored flesh and gore was this! The terror of suspense and uncertainty clutched him. He shrieked, and rubbed his cheek, and wrung his hands, and plunged forward with the speed of a panic-stricken steer behind which pound the hoofs of the stampeded herd. As he turned the rocky coigne that had opposed its battlements to his vision, with cries of interrupted greed and of angry expostulation, hundreds of crows arose in the air above a tall, gaunt, verdureless pine, whose branchless boughs shot athwart the earth like the arms of a gallows. And there, hanging from one of them that bent as if in shame of its infernal burden, with knees drawn up, and limbs distorted, and orbless sockets threateningly glaring, and stringy tongue protruding between black and bleeding and mutilated lips, which were parted in a hideous smile of triumph, to and fro slowly swung a grisly corpse, the gory and mangled remains of a man half torn into shreds and pieces by the foul birds. An old man, too, it had been, for across that face of mortality and decay, softly played a lock of snow-white hair, as if signaling to the happy days of

the distant past, or proffering a flag of truce to remorseless fate. The hands were so drawn by agony's power that the curved fingers, as it swayed with the halting regularity that marks the gait of age, seemed to him to beckon for his companionship. So too, that direful, sightless face turned towards him as if in friendly recognition, and the thickened lips whispered a fearful message from death's domain, which the kindly wind swept from his comprehension.

He threw both hands high above his head in the anguish of abomination and the delirium of alarm, and dashed wildly across the fields, away, away, from so uncanny and inhuman a spectacle. The startled birds regained their courage upon beholding his supine flight, and with screams of unappeased hunger, returned to the ghoulish banquet. Their cries re-echoed in his ears when they were but black specks upon the border of the horizon ; and he strove to hush them by the pressure of his clasp. The swaying spectre still swung before his eyes, and tempted him by its fateful persuasions ; and he tightly closed them though he stumbled and fell through the furrows, and bruised and tore himself against the stone walls and the thorny pickets. He was an object of pity when he reached the nearest farmhouse, and told the gaping swain the details of his shocking adventure. His hat was missing, his hair was dishevelled and streaming in elfin locks ; his raiment was soiled and tattered, and his face was pallid with terror. He looked like one who had met the paralyzing gaze of death, and had withstood its force through the strain of all of his vital powers. It was days before his natural calm reasserted itself ; and many were the nights that in his dreams he lived again those ominous moments, and felt his soul struggling within him to escape at the summons of that spectral hand.

As Jonas sat in the luxuriously pillowed window of his room, a few weeks after his walk by the river with Marcia and looked out upon the familiar vistas before him, the frown of the mountain still oppressed him. He had settled down in the quiet and seclusion to argue with himself, and, if possible, to reduce his surging emotions to the definiteness of cause and effect. Despite his rational conclusions and his discreet resolutions, he had seen Marcia daily, and the charm of her presence had daily become more and more entrancing. All thought of self protection from temptation was now buried in oblivion; his passion had conquered his judgment. The original purpose of their meeting, the spiritual aid and solace which he was to administer to her afflicted and wounded spirit, had as entirely passed from his mind, as it had been an idle caprice of hers. She absorbed his thoughts, and they had become wild and impassioned; for he had ceased all endeavor towards self-control. He revelled in the remembrance of the cool, flaky touch of her hand, of the faint dreamy perfume that seemed to surround her and to be an essence of herself, of the hidden wonders of her form which her grace indicated, and of the dewy crimson of her lips. And yet her soul seemed to him to be most pure and limpid. In no way did he associate his wayward imagination with her influence or intent. But he now believed that he had inherited from some one of his far away ancestors, a natural brutishness which had hitherto lain dormant, but which had at length become thoroughly aroused; and that its cravings were so ardent as to even desecrate the sanctity of her exalted virtue. He had striven with tears and in agony to idealize her, to worship her as the Queen of Heaven should be worshipped, to stand in her presence with downcast eyes and reverent mien;

but he had striven in vain. For not only was this impossible, but when he had succeeded in picturing within his mind an image of ethereal loveliness, as far removed from earth stain, as is one of Raphael's angels, and had prostrated his spirit in adoration before it, it was the face of Naomi that then beamed upon him, as fair and as passionless as is the chastest star of evening. And why this should be so was beyond the ken of his comprehension. For he believed her to be false and treacherous in disposition, and coarse and hoidenish in manner. Day after day, with the skill of a schooled strategist, Marcia had by hint and inference and innuendo so blackened and maligned her cousin's character, without his perceiving that she did so, but on the contrary at the same time strengthening his trust and reliance in her own flower-like simplicity, that scandal's tongue possessed no power to surprise him regarding her. Since, therefore, his mind so causelessly perverted truth and transfigured shame, he had ceased from mental contention ; but not without certain indefinite sensations of remorse.

It was not that he was conscious that he was sinning against God. That thought occasioned within him no uneasiness. He was not disturbed by the conviction of His omniscience, so long as his faults were beyond human discovery. But it grieved him to sin against Marcia. While he strove to rear an altar to her, he made of her a willing voluptuary. He degraded a Lucretia into a Messalina, and he was shocked by his own enormity.

Then too, it had so happened that he had of late frequently encountered Naomi. He had met her as he was hastening to and returning from his daily meal, and it seemed to him that she had in a degree sought these meetings. She had gazed upon him in such a beseeching way, as if questioning the cause of his cold-

ness and indifference, and, though he had preserved an immovable frigidity, her looks of entreaty haunted him. Their friendship had been so natural and so sincere, her interest in him had been so marked and so unfeigned, that it affected him to believe her to be false to him, a wicked neglectful daughter, and a wanton. Yet such was his firm belief.

As Jonas lounged in the window seat and considered these phases of the situation, he finally derived and fashioned within his mind several conclusions. He believed that he loved Marcia, that while his affection was too fiery and physical, yet that it was founded upon esteem and rational admiration. He believed that she possessed every womanly attribute, that her soul was filled with love for the good and the beautiful, and with charity towards all mankind; and that if united with her, his nature would be chastened and would again seek that higher life which had been his goal, but from which it had lately turned with distaste. He fancied her as burdened with the weight of years, as stricken with disease, as wan and haggard and disfigured; and yet she was still Marcia to him, his queen, his goddess, the latchet of whose sandal he was too humble to unloose. So he reasoned and persuaded himself that notwithstanding his luscious vagaries, his affection for her was as pure as it was strong. Nor did he appreciate that he deceived himself; and that while he tried his sincerity by painting her as far different from what she was, he still knew that she was and would be the fascinating reality who had captivated him. He determined that he would put his fate to the test, and would ask her to become his wife. He knew that she was no coquette, that beneath the tenderness of her smile there lurked no deceit, and that when her hand had tremulously

caressed him, even though it had been involuntary, it had been heartfelt. And so he was confident, strange though it seemed to him that fortune should so favor, that those trustful eyes would meet his imploring gaze in assent, and that her honest little heart would join in love's vibrations.

Then Jonas further determined that for Naomi he entertained the deepest contempt, and that her conduct fully justified such a feeling. She had trifled with him, and had sought his confidences only to betray them. She was as undutiful as was Goneril, and as unscrupulous as was Faustine. She was the ally and intimate friend of his bitterest enemy, George Dorne.

And this brought him to his third determination, which was that his hatred towards George was natural and laudatory; and arose from the repelling antagonhim which must exist between good and evil. This passion had grown most rapidly. At first it had been mild and contemptuous, then the blow with the books had deepened it, and ridicule had vitalized it and rendered it undying. For ridicule is the sharpest missile against men who are, like him, contained, morbid, sensitive, contemplative and ever self-conscious. Now George quickly perceived that Jonas was grimly in earnest in his attentions to Marcia. So in every way he had obtruded his presence upon them. He haunted them like the spectre of a mortal sin, and interrupted with his hateful voice and leer every opportunity for sentimentality and courtship. It seemed to be a fatality. How he knew so well their plans and purposes was an unsolved enigma that cudgelled Jonas' brains. But it did not agitate Marcia. He partially believed that Naomi was malicious enough to gain her innocent cousin's simple trust, and then to reveal it to George.

For the boy was omniscient and indefatigable in his mischief; and embarrassed Jonas far more in his wooing, than did his own stiff and obdurate reserve.

So Jonas no longer combated his hatred. He regarded George as a veritable child of evil, an imp of darkness and an emissary of hell, expressly charged by Satan, whose personality was far more vivid and real to him than ever had been that of his Heavenly Father, to torment and persecute him. He felt towards him a strong, constant desire to annihilate and destroy, such as one might feel towards an uncanny, disagreeable, tantalizing apparition, and such as had animated his ancestors in kindling the fires of bigotry about the witches at Salem. The joy and spontaneity of youth neither softened nor attracted him, it was an additional irritation. So impressed had he ever been with the importance of his own sensations, that he was most indignant over his own maltreatment. It seemed to be unjust and monstrous to him, and it was now a part of his determination that it was his duty to avenge such undeserved opprobrium, and to properly administer just punishment. He pictured himself as a saint of the olden time exorcising from George the devils that possessed him; and George as writhing upon the ground in the agony of their fatal departure; and he enjoyed the picture. It returned to his imagination again and again, George wallowing upon the earth, his limbs racked, his features distorted, his body twisted with vital sufferings; while he, the oppressed, the down-trodden, would in triumph stride away. It had even entered into his dreams, and most soothing and delightful they were. He felt so relieved, so superior, so free from the palsying fear of successful ridicule, to be walking in health and vigor upon the solid orb of the world, while George

lay prone and bleeding. Yet in the triumph of his visions, that awful recollection would intrude. Again he would feel the sickening swish against his cheek, again he would hear the dreadful cries of the crows, and see that swaying horror. These dreams were linked together by the ties of mystery and impending destiny; and the pleasure which the one inspired would speedily yield to the overshadowing terror of the other, and Jonas would awaken to wish that the will controlled sleep and that thoughts despised during the day would not hover over his pillow.

His reflections again reverted to Marcia, and his mind expanded in the delights of anticipation. Through the roseate glasses of predilection, he views himself stretched at her feet pouring forth burning words forceful with truth and ornate with poetry. He sees her eyes glisten, her cheek softly glow, and her little hand timidly advance. Now he boldly stands beside her, and reads her love in her trustful expression. Bright, pearly tears tremble upon her lashes, as she shyly bends her head upon his shoulder; and one scalds his hand as he caressingly strokes her. About her willowy waist, never before spanned save by a girdle, steals his throbbing arm. She feebly repulses him for a moment, with the instinctive shrinking of a virgin, and then, oh then, he presses her to his heart, he feels the agitation of her form, the rapid throbbing and fluttering of her breast against him, their lips meet in long clinging lingering kisses that quiver with oppressing ardor, the heavens open, and eternal joy descends in effulgence upon them. She is so gentle and yet so bewitching, and she radiates such truth and affection. She joins in all of his thoughts and is consonant with them. She encourages his aspirations and banishes his doubt. He

portrays to her his future life in the little vine-clad parsonage, back from the quiet country street, under the umbrageous trees. How the prospect delights her ; and how the old desire, for so long a time dead, now revives within him. Oh, beautiful dreams of holiness ! Oh, rare and sacred ambitions of boyhood, now so nobly attained ! Hand in hand, side by side, together they would love and serve. Sympathetic words and kindly deeds would mark each stadium of their journey, a journey heaven-like as it would be heavenward.

So Jonas pondered, and fast disappeared his sorrow and contempt for Naomi, his fierce resentment towards George. Vanished too were the murky thoughts that his imagination had excited. He was at peace with his fate and with the world. All things would be bright with him, when he had forever gained her. Melancholy and despondency and all of that foul crew that had battened upon his solitude would be scattered as are miasms by the frost. Why, he would even grasp George by the hand, and slap him upon the back, and call him a fine fellow, and join in his laughter and jesting. He should visit them, and the bitterness which his sensitiveness had engendered would fade away before the sun of their friendliness. And his church—why, he would cling to her and cherish her and adore her. Mother of ineffable goodness, how devoted a son he would prove !

Jonas, intoxicated with excitement and enthusiasm, now stalked rapidly up and down the limits of his apartment. He gazed upon his books, his shelves weighted with ponderous treatises of controversial lore, and ancient tomes faintly glimmering with truth, which he had lately so shamefully neglected. How he loved them, soothing companions of his seclusion !

He looked upon his pictures of Fathers and holy men, now numbered with the saints, but whose glory was reflected upon him. How he reverenced them and emulated their sinlessness! He viewed his room and all of its simple furniture, his desk, his easy-chair, his student lamp, his modestly draped bed and the mat beside it that his knees had worn in devotion. Dear old room! How sweet, how innocent, how pure, had been its influence! From his window he scanned the landscape. The sun was sinking in the west and bathing the smiling fields in its light which glowed with the warmth of a kindly farewell. But beyond their joyousness, still frowned the Mountain dark and inexorable. The sun sank lower and died in the sky. The fields shivered with the touch of the dew. The long shadows stealthily gathered and combined into gloom. The Mountain grew blacker and denser and more terrible. More than one gaunt, haggard pine on ridge and knoll thrust forth a barren limb against the horizon, a sign-post to Erebus. Jonas shuddered as he again saw the bough bending and swaying beneath its burden, and those ghastly lips to again move in fateful warning. "Not thus shalt thou escape thy doom," were the dread utterances that the night wind seemed to convey. His mood changed. He closed the shutters as if to exclude these hateful memories, and doubt and despondency descended with the evening and again enthralled him.

CHAPTER X.

UNDER the gnarled apple trees, which age had robbed of fruitfulness but not of strength, the hammock was invitingly swung. And slowly swaying from side to side, to the lullaby of the zephyr, Marcia lay in idle and unstudied grace, fairer and sweeter than the fairest and sweetest blossom that the spring had ever engendered upon the waving boughs above her, or that the winds of the summer had scattered upon the sward beneath.

Of course a hammock in "Mammy" Clenton's garden seemed to be as incongruous as would be a chibouk in a chapel; but this had been rigged by an enterprising student, who had graduated the year before, in an obscure and sterile corner, and uncertainty as to whether he would ever reclaim it, had thus far prevented the widow from converting its value into a more negotiable commodity.

She resembled a senorita dreaming away the balmy moments of the siesta under the flaming sun and crystalline sky of Castile; and the rude net surrounded her with the fascinating glamour that the Sprites and the Peris possess when they float upon the breath of the morning, or rock on the tendrils of the honeysuckle. Her soft, white gown of clinging fleecy material revealed the curving charms of her form, as distance does the beauty of the stars. It proved but did not disclose. Her hat of Leghorn straw, about which creamy veiling

was artistically twisted like the turban upon a Persian's brow, had fluttered to the ground ; but one broad, white ribbon clung to her grasp and with this she lazily toyed. Near by, upon the stump of an old tree which had undergone the stroke of time's remorseless axe, sat George Dorne, gazing intently and forcefully into her eyes, that wavered and flickered as though his ardor dazzled them, and carelessly caressing her tresses which the sunlight radiated into a thousand blending hues, or holding her hand in his great, hard brown palm, where it nestled like the first snow-flake upon the dreariness of a December moor.

"You must," he was saying, "I will have my way."

She looked upon him appealingly, entreatingly, as the young Caucasian slave, after her initiation into the harem, might regard the careless throwing of the handkerchief by her master.

"Don't be so ridiculous, George," she cried, "I never heard of anything so absurd and so preposterous! I never was so addressed in the whole course of my life, and why I permit it from you exceeds my comprehension ! But you are so young, and so foolish, that it would be idle for me to dignify your nonsense by anger. I cannot, I will not, I shall not ! Now I hope that is sufficiently definite to satisfy even your perversity. Come, let us chat like reasonable beings. You are so cold-hearted and indifferent, when you know that I am in need of your advice. What had I best do about the Reverend Mr. Chidsy ? His attentions are becoming serious ! He fairly haunts me, and to-day he is coming again. I am so tired of him ! Whatever fun there was in his awkward endeavors and singular protestations, has all worn away ; but he remains as inexorable as fate. Had I appreciated the real nature

of the man, I would have avoided him as I would a mine about to be exploded. But who would expect to find ferocity in a lamb! I am frightened, George. At first, I twisted him as easily as I would a worsted skein in my hands, but there is a resolute power about him that exhibits itself more and more each day."

"Oh let the galoot propose and be hanged! You'll be going home soon, and then you can give him the cold shake. And we'll roast him on it in our mock programme next Commencement. Such things have happened before, they are as common as the word 'inscrutable' in an obituary notice."

"But oh, George," cried the girl, excitedly turning in the hammock, her form undulating as though it were tossed upon the crest of a wave, "He would kiss me, and I could not endure his kisses. He is so noxious and uncanny. The touch of his hands is as repulsive as would be the caress of a serpent. They are so long, and so flexible in their joints, and so cold, and so damp, that they seem like the tentacles of a Sepia; and yet he burns so with inward fire. Then, too, he has a habit of secretly munching upon bits of elm bark, and the contact of his lips would be like the application of a poultice. He has sometimes looked at me so strangely when I have sought his condolence," and Marcia pouted in mockery, "that I have very quickly armed myself with dignity and reserve. He makes one feel like a poor forlorn captive upon a cannibal isle. Not but that I like kisses," she continued, after a moment's pause while the pearly freshness of her cheeks deepened into pink, that most rare and delicious of hues in pearls, "But that depends. You ought to know, George, whether I like them or not." And she glanced languishingly upon him from under her half-closed lids.

To gain one such gleam of passionate revelation and regard, Jonas would have joyfully thrust his right arm into a caldron of boiling pitch, or would have willingly pledged the salvation of his soul, and have sustained the eternal torments of that actual and physical hell in which he so firmly believed. But it fell shattered against the impregnable buttress of George's stolidity. He turned his eyes towards her listlessly, he nibbled a little upon a blade of grass which he had been twisting around his finger, he whistled a few notes of incredulity, and then he replied :

"That won't do, you know. You've shown me plainly enough how much you think of me. I ain't no fool! Actions speak louder than words, and you've gone dead back on me and no mistake."

Marcia's lips trembled like twin sisters led into martyrdom, and her breast heaved irregularly with conflicting emotions ; as will the placid bosom of the silvery lake when the tempest rends the clouds and down the valleys between the surrounding hills, the fierce blasts in contention sweep. But George remained with all of the tranquillity of silence upon the stump whose iron like fibres symbolized his own obduracy, in bovine contentment and fleshly repose. His broad, athletic thighs were outstretched, and his massive shoulders were well thrown back and revealed the lustiness of his throat.

" You know that I would do anything for you," she faltered.

" Well ? "

A long pause ensued, for hesitation clogged her speech. Desire and prudence argued within her, and determination had not yet decided their controversy. Tears ringed her eyes with pathos. With the crimson

tip of her serpentine tongue, she soothed her tremulous lips. And between them glistened the sheen of her iridescent teeth.

George bent to the ground and selected a large piece of bark, which the mischievous fingers of the wind had peeled from one of the trees. He opened his jack-knife, and with all of the deftness that constant whittling in moments of idleness can give to a school boy, he rapidly carved the rough but distinct outlines of a man kneeling in adoration. And while he worked, he softly whistled the refrain of "A frog he would a wooing go."

Marcia gasped with indignation. How brutish, how sodden of feeling he was! How Satyr-like in his utter lack of sensibility! What evil had possessed her that she should be moved by so dull a clod! Where was her shame? Where was her pride in the superiority of her sex? For an instant that self-contempt which traitors know oppressed her. Prudence summoned abashment to her assistance, and their attack seemed about to prove successful, when the sound of the ringing of the Academy bell thrilled the air.

"Recitation! I must be off. Ta-ta," cried George, as he dashed down the path in a desperate race with time and distance. She watched the buoyancy of his step, the haughty carriage of his head, the careless swing of his brawny arms, and the mightiness of his stride. Full well did she now know what evil had possessed her.

"George, oh George, I will," she exclaimed. He stopped and turned and waved his hand to her.

"I thought you would," he triumphantly laughed, and then breaking again into a run, his rapidly retreating figure faded from her sight,

After his departure, Marcia quietly swayed in harmo-

nious vibration with the bending tree tops, which seemed to join in the universal homage that her charms exacted. The burr and drone of animated nature lulled her senses into sweet forgetfulness. Only dreamy thoughts engaged her mind, and they must have been pleasant ones, for smiles awakened the dimples of her cheeks. She lay as if fondled in the lap of the breeze, and hushed by the soothing voice of autumn. The peace of physical contentment and mental inactivity wrapped her with perfect repose.

Perhaps the god of sleep flying before the advancing day would have led her a willing prisoner in his train, had not a low gentle voice almost querulous in its minor tones aroused her energy, and glancing upward she saw her cousin Naomi standing beside her. Naomi it surely was ; but a far different, vastly changed Naomi, from the vigorous young girl, surcharged with ardor and vim and nervous force, who had upon the campus but a few weeks since so discomfited the boys in their onslaught upon Jonas. The kindly sun of her love had grown torrid and intense. Its rays no longer cherished but withered and blighted ; and her nature had drooped from aridity and from the foul vapors of distrust and suspicion and indignity which they had created. Her vitality had been absolute faith, and this she had forever lost. Like the modest pansy, which the zephyrs had deserted, and whose stem the rugged storm had ruthlessly broken as a giant might rend the palpitating breast of a swallow, she was beautiful with the fading beauty of the rainbow. Sadness enslaved her expression, and from her eyes the light of other worlds shone with melancholy significance.

"How quiet, how restful, you seem, Marcia," she said, "Like unto a soul whose memories have been

quenched by the waters of the Lethe. I have been upon my feet since dawn, and even now am neglecting a task that is still undone; for I am stifling for a draught of fresh air, and for the cool breath of the hills."

"The more fool you," yawned Marcia inconsequently and indifferently.

"I am not so strong as I used to be," continued Naomi apologetically. "And that wearisome pain in my side never leaves me. Then, too, such weird thoughts absorb my attention, that at times I find myself dreaming in utter forgetfulness of my work. It is an effort for me to concentrate my faculties upon the present duty."

Marcia regarded her cousin with the cold interest of an anatomist, who proves the wonders of the disease and heeds not the agony of the subject. She perceived that she was pallid and wan, that her complexion was translucent with debility, and that beneath her serious eyes, pain had drawn its dark expressive lines.

"I greatly fear, my sweet coz, that it is not toil alone that oppresses you. How about the little Pagan god, who though blind and naked and childish, is still so mighty? Is the heart of the sainted Jonas impervious to his arrow? Ah, how iconoclastic is theology! Its hammers have shattered the proudest shrines of the ancient cult, and their deities are powerless to avenge the sacrilege, so formidably accoutered are its soldiers." And Marcia uttered a malicious little laugh, as cool as the ripple of forest spring over a moss-clad rock.

"Oh, Marcia, I must talk to some one, and so I will to you; though you are so changed since you first obtained my confidence. My heart is breaking. I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, and uncertainty is killing me. He is so cold and distant towards me, and now shuns

my presence, I know that he does! Won't you help me, won't you advise me, you must understand the reason for this difference? What have I done? What does it mean? Does he tell you, you are with him so much? Yet I know that you do not care for him as I do, you ridicule him so; though how you can wrong so noble a man passes my comprehension."

"Care for him," sneered Marcia, "Yes, as much as I do for the moth that falls scorched and helpless from the light. Poor fool, he amuses me! His antics and contortions are diverting. I could heartily enjoy witnessing a bear dancing upon heated plates, and the knowledge of his pain would not mitigate my pleasure. He is my bear. As for what he says about you, his remarks I must confess, for candor is a cousinly virtue, are not flattering. He believes that you are selfish and indolent; and that you shamefully neglect your poor mother to flirt with the boys, especially with that froward and unconscionable young rascal George Dorne. He actually thinks that his duty will cause him to sternly admonish you for your manifold sins and weaknesses."

Naomi grew as pale as is the outline of the Matterhorn against the night. Her breath struggled in her throat in the paroxysms of hysteria; yet she bravely strove to control herself as she replied.

"What malign power possesses you, Marcia! For it is you who has misrepresented and betrayed me. When you came to Armway, my heart was yearning for the solace of a friend, and I buried you deep within it. My life had been so constrained, so narrow, so irksome, that you were the realization of a glorious ideal. Have I ever offended you? Have I ever been disloyal to you? Surely I endeavor to be kind and attentive. Your service was love, and I was as happy in it as are

the angels in their labors. Yet you seek my undoing and glory in it. Oh, I am so miserable."

The lines of restraint broke into quivers upon her face, she buried it within her hands, and between her fingers the hot tears of anguish trickled. Marcia became transformed. Her cheeks narrowed, her nose and chin elongated, her eyes grew more almond-shaped, and from their corners shot out that sinister light with which the tiger illumines the jungle.

"I will tell you," she cried, "something that I rarely tell, and that is the truth. For you are such a low-spirited little ninny that you would never betray me. I hate you because you are, what I only seem to be, good and true and pure. I hate these very words which describe your immaculate attributes, and their sanctimonious meanings. I abhor excellence. Do you suppose that I care for the drivel of that hypocrite? He wearies me, oh, he wearies me so; yet his devotion proves my sway, and heightens my self-esteem, and wipes away the uncomfortable sense of inferiority which your virtues produce. I love to destroy his ideals, to arouse his passion and to coerce his will. I love success and conquests and submission, for I am seducing and beautiful, and am entitled to the allegiance of all. Besides I love to tease and to annoy, while I seem to caress and to condole. You fairly challenged me when you expatiated so sentimentally upon this paragon, and you shall see him at my feet. The flesh shall conquer the spirit! And behold, here he comes over the lawn at this most auspicious instant, groping along in the intensity of his reverie like a mole or a somnambulist!"

Naomi hastily glanced towards the house. Yes, there was Jonas plodding towards them with all of the determination of step that marks a rustic militia man, uncon-

scious as yet of their proximity, but evidently seeking the hammock in hopes of there finding Marcia.

"What shall I do, what shall I do," she moaned, "I cannot meet him and expose to his inquiries my tear-stained face."

Beyond the hammock, the shrubbery grew high and dense; and shrouded by it from all observation, in the angle of the fence, was a rustic seat. Thither in her agitation, Naomi hastened; nor did she appreciate until it was too late that there she must remain a prisoner and an unwilling listener. But Marcia realized the situation at once, and a sparkle of malicious enjoyment brightened her face. In the anticipation of her triumph, she rapidly matured a plan of action; nor did she heed nor consider the ultimate results that might follow its execution, so carried away was she by mischievous intent. She summoned him to her side.

"I am resting," she said, "The hot air of the kitchen after so many hours oppressed and stifled me. I longed for the breeze with its tonic of hemlock and pine, for the deep matchless blue of the sky, and for the great fleecy clouds. They seem to be the border-land of heaven, and as I watched them just now, I thought that perchance my journey was nearing its end, and that soon I would be there, 'Where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.' Then such deep contentment enwrapped me, But you do not disturb me, Mr. Chidsy, though others might do so. The sympathy of a true friend increases the pleasure of such contemplation. But pray pardon me, if I still continue to lie here for I am so fatigued."

"How wrong it is of you, Miss Clenton," exclaimed Jonas clasping his long hands together so earnestly that his fingers snapped like whip cords, "How wrong it is

to expose your fragile form to these exhausting and demeaning labors! You, who have been so tenderly reared! See what an effect it has upon the ordinary buoyancy of your spirit! It is not the divine purpose to impose too heavy a burden, and when you assume it, you exceed your duty. I tell you with all of the spiritual authority of your pastor, that such exertions are positively sinful."

"Call it not demeaning! If you could see the light break over poor old Auntie's wrinkled face, when I offer to assist her, you would rather term it ennobling."

"Yes, so it would be, if necessity demanded it. But she is not bereft. There is her daughter, her wicked neglectful daughter! Does she not owe filial obligation?"

"Do not ask me, Mr. Chidsy. Is it not written, 'Judge not that ye be not judged'?"

Solemn and slow were her accents as she uttered these words. She straightened herself still more in the hammock; and with eyes half closed, and nostrils distended, lay as motionless as a prophetess in the trance that precedes inspiration. Upon her brow Jonas traced the touch of care and of lassitude. Deep indignation seized him, and he yielded to it, for he knew that it was righteous.

"It is a duty, that both time and eternity impose upon the priesthood, to unflinchingly condemn evil, no matter how fair and how pleasing the form in which it manifests itself. The dragon must be trampled under foot. And I would be recreant to my vows and to my order should I avoid it. Her conduct towards her mother, and towards you, her guest, is abominable. Let her heed the warning of the decalogue, lest her days, not yours, be brief and nigh to their close. I feel as though I could never again address her, save in words of cen-

sure and stern rebuke; and these, when the first opportunity presents itself, I shall unflinchingly administer."

Marcia waved her hand as if in deprecation. As it fell towards her side, it brushed against his knee, and for an instant there lingered. In that instant he grasped it strongly within his own; and its faint touch changed the current of his thoughts as completely as will the fall of a crag divert a mountain stream. Oh, delicious little hand; so expressive, so sentient! How penetrating its glow! How subtle the magic of its palm! The silence of consciousness surrounded them. The garden smiled in the sunlight, and exhaled perfumes from nature's laboratory. Upon the bough above them two birds twittered their love in the universal language of creation.

"How happy I am," sighed Marcia, and slowly the heavily draped curtains of her eyes unfolded, and tenderness and truth beamed upon him.

"Can my dreams be true," cried Jonas, as he sank upon his knees beside her. "Am I indeed the most blessed of men! Oh, my darling, how I love you, how I worship you! I kiss the hem of your garment, the latchet of your sandal. Like Jacob for seven long years would I serve to gain thee, and deem them the most precious sand from the vase of time. You are my pearl, my ideal, my divinity! Never before loved man as I do love, and never before has soul of mortal been so gladdened. I am yours, unalterably, absolutely! Take me and mould me as you will. I am like clay in the hands of the potter. I have no thought, no yearning, no ambition, no desire, except for thee. Thou art my future and my heaven!"

He threw his arms about her, and leant his head upon her breast. Strongly he could hear her heart beat, and

each throb seemed to promise fidelity and devotion.

"You know that I love you, Jonas," she simply replied, as she soothed with the caress of a mother's hand his thick masses of hair. "Why should I not, you are so good, so noble, so truly manly and upright. Long have I known that the affection of a devout man was an inestimable jewel; and now, how happy am I to be adorned with it."

"Side by side down life's valley will we advance together. Mine be the task, my darling, to pluck all thorns and thistles from your pathway, and mine be the delight. You could readily render me a villain; for crime at your suggestion would seem to be honorable. But since you are the ineffable being of purity that you are, I must be a man of piety, such an one as I have aspired to be in the full hope of my career when the clouds of doubt and despondency had not gathered."

"You are untrue to yourself, dear one. Your nature is too grand to yield to the assault of sin. You would not be human, were you not tempted; you would not be yourself, did you not resist and conquer. Not but that I hope to prove a help and a comfort to you, though the utterance of such a thought sounds presumptuous."

"Marcia, I know my heart far better then ever before. The forces of my love have thoroughly uprooted and revealed it to me. Within me struggle passions that are fierce and masterful. I tremble when I realize how they would rend me, were you now to be lost to me. Your influence were it not holy, would be terrific in its potency!"

And Jonas shivered and moaned and pressed her closer and closer to him. She reassured him with calm restful words, until the turmoil of his soul had ceased. Then his face shone with a radiance that beautified it. Joy

gleamed within his eyes; he looked upon Marcia and he laughed aloud. Standing to his full height, he expanded his chest and stretched his arms forth towards the skies in exultation. She watched him with the impassive scrutiny of an oracle inspecting the entrails of a victim. She joined him and stood by his side. Their lips met in a kiss that thrilled him, from tip of toe to the crinkles of his locks, with a full knowledge of passion. Weird lights, blue and yellow and crimson, flashed before him; and in his ear resounded the voice of the ocean.

"In the heaven of thy smile may I forever dwell," he exclaimed.

They turned and slowly strolled down the garden walk; but as they reached the shrubbery, a low moan and the muffled plunge of a fall arrested them. Like that inexorable spouse of the doomed Macbeth listening for Duncan's mortal shriek, like England's haughty virgin Queen awaiting the step of the retainer who would herald the fall of the axe upon Mary's slender neck, Marcia stood in silent expectancy. Only the quivering clutch of her fingers denoted her suppressed excitement. But Jonas, springing to the other side, uttered a cry of horror. For there lay Naomi, in death-like insensibility; her pretty, white garments dabbled and stained by the thin stream of blood, which stole from between her colorless lips.

CHAPTER XI.

NAOMI was very ill, so ill that even her mother, who had always treated her as if she embodied the principles of perpetual motion and durability, admitted it. So ill was she that for once that cackling voice did not awaken the echoes of her name within the house, as it had a hundred times a day during the preceding ten years. So ill was she that the boys in their rooms were noiseless; and the accustomed sounds of clogging, of wrestling and of singing, and the dulcet strains of melancholy flute and of simple harmonica were no longer heard. The silence of vacation enclosed the grim old halls. Moreover, wonderful though it be to relate, the village doctor had been summoned, an event that had not transpired in the annals of the family since he had assisted in his feeble way in the shuffling off of the mortal coil that had bound the lamented "J. M." to the cares and woes of this life. Surprised indeed he had been when he had received this demand upon his professional services; for Mrs. Clenton was well known to be a stout believer in the efficacy of home-made medicines and mixtures of "Yarbs," since they possessed two invaluable qualifications in her sight, being both cheap and nasty. And he wondered as he drove thither, in his gig which had rattled a contemptuous challenge to age for a half century, whether this visit would in any way legally renew and revive his old account for ghostly

services then rendered, which the stricken widow had never recovered sufficiently from her grief to calmly consider and liquidate. For the doctor was growing very old; and, like his drugs which he had purchased and stored, when he had attained that dizzy height of learning which honors the daring adventurer with a physician's degree, he had lost to a certain extent his strength and powers. So he maundered over this bygone indebtedness, and "thought it was only right that it should," this being the ordinary process of mental activity by which he arrived at any definite conclusion from a dose to a diagnosis,

Ill indeed was Naomi. She lay upon her little couch like a drowned maiden upon the bosom of a lonely pool. Her hands were crossed upon her breast; and her hair was tossed back over the waves of her pillow, like masses of sea weed upon the foam of the ocean's surge. Her eyes, darker, deeper, more mystical than ever before, made luminous the pallor and the gray of her cheek. The quiver of an aspen, in the portentous hush that precedes the tempest, was more perceptible than the ripple of her breath. Her room, of course, for space was valuable, was in the highest story, nestling with the swallows under the eaves of the great brick building. It was as exquisitely neat as is the abode of a Shakeress; and an air of chaste and severe refinement distinguished its barrenness and poverty. The chintz curtains and draperies of the chairs and settles flowered brightly; the yellow boards shone like a pavement of inlaid gold in the sunlight; while the crystal of the little plain mirror, framed with painted deal, reflected the verdure of the hills and the cerulean tints of the sky.

In the rooms upon the lower floor the bustle of every day still triumphantly ruled. For dollars and cents out-

weigh sentiment in importance. When they accord it is all very well; but when they contend, the former must prevail; since the sheen of gold is eternal, and the light of love is evanescent. Her mother hurried with her work with the greed and thrift of a contractor, whose eagerness had exceeded honesty. The incessant squeak of her heelless shoes expressed the anguish of her lacerated spirit; but it also denoted her unswerving loyalty to pelf. She had obtained, in the dire necessity that foreboded the hiring of additional help, the assistance of a cousin upon her husband's side, who in common with all others of his family possessed the blessedness of meekness in a marked degree. And she, poor soul, whose prolonged and attenuated spinsterhood had seldom overstepped the bounds of a distant farmhouse, where she had faithfully nurtured irritability and imbecility in the shape of her decrepit parents, had assumed with joy the yoke which Naomi had so patiently borne. The future had broadened into pleasurable vistas before her; and she had welcomed the unremitting toil and lowly labor, with all of the appetite of a poverty-stricken epicure who is unexpectedly invited to a feast. Samantha was her name, and like it she was long and jointed and angular. Contentment and grief strove to control her countenance as she glided hither and thither at Mrs. Clenton's beck and call, with the submissive aptitude of a Helot. Hope had not spurned her humility; but had kindled the thought within her that her life might become more attractive, "should anything happen to poor, dear Naomee." She recalled with the minuteness and exaggeration of envy, the closet that contained Naomi's meagre wardrobe. How capacious and how well filled it seemed to her! What stores of rare fabrics were there concealed, which might

become her own, under the dispensation of a discriminating Providence!

O, poor humanity, how limitless is thy wretchedness; since each sorry lot possesses a charm! How infinitesimal is the divine spark of thy charity; since selfishness can always cap it! Unfortunate and bereft indeed is the mortal, about whose death-bed stand not eager-eyed avarice and grasping expectancy!

Again and anon, the kitchen door, which had been carefully left ajar, would silently swing and the wife of a neighbor or of a church dignitary would mournfully yet excitedly enter. Each one was fully prepared in the part she was about to play, and the unanimity of condolence would have been delightful, had it not been so pathetic. No one shirked, but all cheerfully joined in increasing the confused murmur of sympathy that sweetened the air. "It is so sad," and "We must all bend to His will," and "Is she conscious?" and "Does she suffer much?" and "Has the minister been here?" were the expressions which arose like clouds of incense enwrapping a bier, and assuaged the widow's grief. Her self-importance expanded. She felt that she was the central figure in a domestic tragedy; and that misfortune had rendered her interesting, which is often the apex of feminine ambition. So she yielded to the indirect but seductive flattery of their attentions, and regarded herself with compassion. She was so brave, she had been so tried, she had withstood so much! In her sorrow she quite ignored Naomi's suffering, and only regarded it objectively, as it affected her own most precious self.

"It's a comfort though," she remarked, "that I have my weeds packed away safe and sound, sence I took on colors two years arter poor dear 'J. M.' went. They

be so expensive, and along with everything else, it all costs a deal."

"Yes, indeed it do," replied a gossip who was seeking oriental stimulus from a very thin drawing of supposititious tea, an especial honor which was vouchsafed to her alone, in recognition of the unparalleled capabilities of her tear-ducts.

The old doctor ambled in and tottered upstairs, attended, like an eastern potentate, by a train of admiring women; most of whom had received his ministrations in what they termed "family matters," and could, if they chose, and they did very often choose, relate pleasing anecdotes of his skill and geniality. And though he seemed to be ten years older, when he exchanged the sure support of his gig for the uncertain waverings of his knees; yet he was imbued with so learned an air, he tapped his snuff-box and shook his bandanna with such assurance, that the glances which heroes court were lavished upon him. They crowded about with explanation and suggestion; yet they were so careful not to disturb, that their shrill whispers cut the atmosphere like the agonizing whiz of a buzz saw. But Naomi heeded it not; and when he vacillated down the stairs, they all accompanied him confident in the belief that they had been helpful and neighborly.

"Trust to nature," he repeatedly said, "She is a slow but sure nurse. All that we can do is to assist her." And, since it is as natural to die as it is to breathe, it is possible that he did, with his hap-hazard doses of drugs mixed by judgment alone, very often succeed in this endeavor. What a comfort it was to have his services at such a trying time! No one knew what might happen, and if it did happen, how consoling was the thought that everything had been done that could have been

done! Then too his presence was as quieting as a nerve tonic. He had seen so many bodies and souls quarrel and separate, that this experience had given to him a serenity that affected them all. Besides he was so entertaining, and gathered so much news during his daily peregrinations from household to household, and regaled it with such relish; and said so many, many things that no man can say except a family physician, that sorrow and remembrance were disordered and routed.

The minister came, solemn, dignified and composed; for the ill-omen of his coming was impersonal in its boding, and his health was without a blemish. His black coat clung to his form without fold or wrinkle, his linen was spotless, his voluminous tie was snowy and perfectedly adjusted, and he bore himself with the rigidity of a pipe-clayed veteran. He, too, climbed the creaking stairs and sat beside the sick girl. And his voice was sympathetic and gentle as he stroked her forehead and hand, and repeated the blessed promises that his Creed had taught him. She watched him closely with her deep brown eyes, wide spread, and glittering with the fading light of stars awaiting the dawn; but she spake not, nor showed sign of recognition. And he, good man that he was, knowing her as well as he knew the child of his bosom whom he had fondled upon his knee and rocked within his arms, and appreciating that peaceful would be his death-bed, could he then attain her love and confidence in God, silently withdrew from the room, a tear, born of sincerity and not of deportment, unconsciously creeping from under his iron-rimmed glasses. But when he reached the convocation of comfortable and comforting "Sisters in the Lord," he speedily regained his equanimity. All waited his advent with the agreeable anticipation and certainty which greets the

progress of a twice told tale. For each one had known sorrow, and its salaried recompense.

The widowed mother, with well selected, oft conned and spoken phrases, was admonished to bear her burdens with resignation; and so, upheld by friends, physician, and spiritual adviser, the widowed mother became more and more submissive. The unusual excitement, so different from her daily routine of scrimping and starving, stimulated her. There were so many things to consider, so many to discuss. She must control herself, and behave like a woman of sense. Poor dear, of course it was hard to plan concerning the worst, but it is best to be always prepared. If that sad overshadowing event should occur, everything should be done decently and in order. Her standing in the community demanded this. And yet, there should be no extravagance. The necessary expense must be reasonable and moderate, for she belonged to and sprang from plain, honest, God-fearing people. All the relations upon both branches of the family tree must of course be notified; and since they would come from homes scattered and distant, a lunch must be provided for them. Cold? Oh, yes, cold meats for a funeral, that was much more seemly; and then so much in the house could be utilized. Besides, for a few days, the boys could not expect to receive their regular meals. They could just as well as not dine at the commons, or at the village restaurant; and what a saving this would be, more than sufficient to pay for such an entertainment. Well, well, how true it is that every cloud has a silver lining, and how tempered is the wind to the shorn lamb! So Mrs. Clenton communed with her neighbors, and thought after thought flashed through her aroused and active mind, and found ready utterance upon her tireless lips.

Samantha, good-natured soul, was in peripatetic and intermittent attendance upon her work and upon Naomi. She was bewildered by the incompatibilities of her instruction. She must perform each household labor faithfully, but she must also carefully watch and attend the patient. So in endeavoring to perform two duties at one time, she failed in both. When she was in the sick room, Naomi's extreme quiet re-assured her, and the scolding voice of her mistress would ring in her ears summoning her to her work. But when she resumed her toil, then the yearning, questioning light of those beseeching eyes would pervade her intelligence, and call her away again. For when she had arrived at the house, Naomi had asked for her, and in the faltering tones of debility had begged her to convey the message to Jonas Chidsy, that she must speak with him. This she had promised to do, and, as she thought, had to the letter performed. Of course, she could not personally attend to it, for Mrs. Clenton's vigilance imprisoned her, neither would she have known Jonas had she encountered him. So she had sought Marcia, and had communicated Naomi's wish to her, and she had willingly and eagerly assumed the mission, and had straightway departed upon her quest, reminding Samantha as she glided down the garden path in her clinging draperies of white, of an angel obeying the mandates of God.

And hour after hour, Naomi lay patiently waiting, earnestly questioning her attendant's face when she entered, and as each time she shook her head, sadly closing her eyes. The doctor in his long years of practice had committed by rote certain maxims of wisdom, one of which, "Extreme rest and quiet," he had prescribed in this case with all of the erudition of an almanac. Indeed it was apparent to the most inexperienced that in the

faithful adherence to this direction lay Naomi's one chance of recovery ; since any abrupt movement or the slightest exertion upon her part would in all probability produce another hemorrhage. Full well did she appreciate her danger, for she possessed perfect consciousness, though at times her mind seemed to her to be far lighter than the air, and like a bird poised with outspread pinions upon the edge of its native nest, to be struggling impatiently for flight. Her disposition had always been sunny and happy. She had acknowledged her lot, and the futility of affecting it by grief or repining. Each night, when she had sunk upon her knees, by her little cot, upon the old, thread-bare mat that was more precious in the sight of the All Wise then the most costly prayer-rug in the boudoir of fashion, she had thanked her God for the many blessings that He had bestowed upon her, and she had thanked Him from her heart.

But now, when life's horizon had suddenly contracted, and its limits were within hand's reach, no fear nor regret haunted her soul. For the first time, she realized that if unhappiness resulted from circumstances alone, she should ever have been very unhappy. The years rolled back before her mental vision, and she was astonished as she recognized herself toiling, continually toiling. One word expressed her girlhood, that tender age of solicitous nurture and maternal cherishing, and that was drudgery. Hard and ungracious this existence had been, and now, should the slumber of death encompass her, she would welcome its touch as the caress of a new and trusty friend, and would willingly sink into its embrace, confident that no nightmare of sin could disturb its kindly and serene repose.

Her thoughts riveted themselves upon Jonas, and she appreciated and now admitted to herself, since it was

all so impossible, that the hope of gaining his companionship, of winning his love, and of becoming a helpmate to him, had been her buoyant support. How rudely the incompassionate waves of fate had dashed it from her! Yet she sorrowed not for herself, but for him! Poor child! Her experience with mankind had been so limited; she knew so little, she believed so much. He seemed to her to be the ideal man of gentleness and of truth, filled with holy desires and noble ambitions, humbly following the indelible footprints of the Saviour, and enriching the world by his example, and by the charity of his ministrations. It had shocked her, and had terribly wrung her innocent heart to hear from his very lips, her own undeserved condemnation. But this sense of unjust contumely had passed away, and her interest and anxiety were centered upon his future welfare. He was so sensitive, so easily moved, so easily wounded. What would become of him should he discover Marcia's true nature and regard? What would become of him if he should not? With that vividness which is a recompense of death, she read her cousin's motives in her deeds. She perceived that it was her own concealed presence which had so stirred Marcia that, overbalanced by delight in the anguish she was thus occasioning, she had forced him to his avowal, and herself to its acceptance. Still, even if this were so, would she not now cling to him? He possessed so many qualifications that worldliness could covet! He was so talented, so handsome, and of such irreproachable character! Would she not conclude that she could not better herself; and by clinging to him, ruin him in body and in soul? For Naomi could see naught but ruin in such a union; ruin of that life work which promised such benefits to humanity; ruin of that

gentle, godly, guileless spirit, which was such patent proof of man's divine origin and nature. But on the other hand, should she toss him away like a worn glove, or a flavorless fruit, how terrific would be the shock to his sensibilities and to his beliefs! How bitter and skeptical might he grow, and how hardened and obdurate might his character become! A heart-rending disappointment, a blasting of pure unselfish hopes, surely awaited him. In one case it might eat away his soul with the slow rust of years, in the other, consume it with the lightning's flash.

Yet she knew which fate would be more propitious for his future; and she would save him before she died, and then she would most willingly die! She would save him from Marcia, and from himself! Severe would be the blow; but it would be delivered openly and full in the face, for friendship hath no poisoned stiletto. Besides, his faith would withstand a sudden shock; it might be weakened by the insidiousness of time. Better the tear of sympathy, than the smile of treachery. Better the sorrowful tones of sincerity, than the triumphant jeer of ridicule! Yes, she would warn him, if he would only come in time! Such constant thought wearied her so, and she so longed for rest. Through the little, diamond-shaped window of her room, she could see the hills wreathing her view with their shadowy green. How peaceful was their sleep, so far removed from the turmoil of the world below! How enticing, in the dreamy allurements of its vast depth and translucency, was the blue above them! She could wait no longer. When the wavering of her bewildered intellect again induced Samantha to enter, in forced tones of eagerness she asked her whether Jonas had surely received her message. "Certainly he has," was the con-

fident reply. "And now go to sleep in peace, dearie, and tranquilly await his coming. For I sent it to him early this morning by your cousin, and he must soon be here."

Naomi closed her eyes, and Samantha, satisfied that her mandate would be obeyed, and timorous lest the hush of voices on the lower floor boded renewed vigilance upon Mrs. Clenton's part, stealthily crept from the room. Yes, "sleep in peace," knowing that life, like a cruel taskmaster hath reserved its heaviest burdens for the closing hours of fatigue and weakness! "Tranquilly await his coming," knowing full well that that message hath joined the myriads of undelivered ones, which in their misadventure so affect human destiny!

Naomi now felt the bitterness of death. How inexorable, how inflexible it was! How disdainfully it brushed aside, from its pathway, the tangles of mortal hope and purposes; as might a giant, the snare that a lad had laid to entrap a bird! What could she do, alone and helpless, so weak that even the thought of raising her hands from her breast exhausted her! Must she die, and leave him unprepared, unwarned, to deception and despair! He had always been so kind to her before Marcia came; and was this the reward she returned to him? She reviewed and exaggerated every chance meeting with him; her excited memory recalled every glance, and imagination colored it with affection. On this day, they had met in the long lane under the waving chestnut boughs; and he had talked so seriously, and with such personal interest, to her of herself and her duty. How noble he had appeared, as the cordiality of his words had brightened his eye and tinted his cheek! On this day, he had dined with her aunt; and she had sat beside him. How the closeness of his being had

thrilled, yet awed her: and how dignified and priestly he had borne himself in his garb of sombre hue!

He had been attracted by her, she knew that he had. How well she remembered the Sunday when he had for the first time been designated to address the congregation in the chapel; and she had sat with hands so tightly clasped to still their trembling that each for hours after bore the imprint of the other, as she awaited the notes of the processional! And when he had advanced towards the pulpit, he had instinctively glanced towards her for encouragement. And she had read his embarrassment and dread of failure; and had concentrated her soul in prayer for his success; and when their eyes had again met, they had both realized that she had helped him. Ah, what a wonderful discourse that had been! How it had impressed her! How majestic and like unto a prophet of God, that pale young man had seemed! How fearless and terrific had been his denunciations of the blandishments of the flesh! How vivid had been his picture of the entrapped and ruined man; how scathing his condemnation of that woman who dwelt in the valley of Sorek, of Delilah!

Delilah—a thought flashed through Naomi's brain, instantaneous in conception and birth; yet fully developed and equipped. She was no longer helpless; she could, she would save him! She leaped lightly from her bed; and her little, bare feet beat a pitiful pit a-pat upon the boards, as she glided towards her desk. Heedless of the rapidly revolving room, of the strangely varied lights that shot in intense and brilliant hues across her vision, of the weird voices that called to her in language unintelligible yet dimly familiar, she persevered until she reached it. Well was it for her purpose, that everything was there arranged with her

peculiar neatness; for her sense of touch alone guided her. She quickly found a sheet of paper; she wrote upon it, in trembling characters, a single word; she folded it, and sealed it, and directed it to "Mr. Jonas Chidsy"; and then, holding it tightly within her hand, she staggered again to her couch.

Once more the lightness and buoyancy of her mind affected her; once more she perceived its flutterings towards freedom. A rayless cloud seemed to be settling upon her, hiding the streaming sunlight from her gaze. The beatings of her heart rushed and roared like surf upon the lee-shore of destiny. Sharp pains racked her chest, and awoke her to herself. She remembered how, night after night, when she had been so weary that the climbing of the stairs had been a journey almost interminable, and when her arms had ached so, from the toil which she had undergone, that she could scarcely arrange her simple toilet, she had murmured the prayer which she had daily repeated from the time when her tongue had first learned its cunning, the trustful utterance of a child to her God; and, drawing the clothes closely about her, had sunk into rest, lulled by the thought that she deserved and had earned, by her arduous labors, its peacefulness. So now, a great and perfect calm pervaded her soul. She had done all that she could! She had been faithful to the one whom she held most dear! For him she had exhausted all of her power, for him she had forfeited the little respite which caution might have granted. He was saved to himself, and he was saved by her! He would know her meaning, and his own words would instruct and admonish him. Softly fell the whispers of the childish words of the old familiar supplication from the ashen lips; like a shower of white roses upon a silver shrine. Carefully the waxen

hand gathered the coverings over the quivering breast. Again rest, compassionate rest, descended upon the little room; again, and forever.

The birds sang in the topmost boughs of the sturdy trees that swayed beyond the thatched eaves. Life attuned their lay; and each leaf, and the breeze, heavy with the fruitful scent of autumn, received and returned it. The daughters of the soil, overweighted with its clay, prattled their silly commonplaces in the apartments below; the clergyman and the physician, in their comfortable homes, were complacently enjoying the evening repast; down by the garden gate, Marcia was standing in the statuesque perfection of soulless vitality, awaiting the chance tribute to her vanity which the passer-by might bestow; within his Seminary study, Jonas was idly dreaming of an impossible bliss; but in the little chamber in the attic, which even thrift had disdainfully refused to seize, Naomi lay smiling in death; while from between her lips, parted by the happiness of her sacrifice, slowly oozed the crimson stream whose ebb and flow had, alas! lost all significance and terror.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING all of the sad circumstances that combine together in producing appropriate obsequies, throughout the interregnum of three days which death snatches from every household rule, Marcia conducted herself with unexceptionable propriety and consideration. Her grief, though deep, was unobtrusive and reticent. She concealed it from sympathy by her unselfish strivings to cheer and to comfort others. She gained the respectful admiration of the sisterhood who still haunted the darkened rooms, by her attention to their needs, and by the elegancies of her toilet, which, amid their tears, they furtively studied. Of course, at times, her control would yield to the voice of incident and association, and would break away into tears. Then she seemed like some fair statue beneath a fountain, whose beauty, though worn by the waters, shines through their mantle with melting and entrancing splendor. She proved a ministering angel to her aunt, who, through the force of tradition, had speedily become reduced to a condition of abject helplessness. She assumed the management of the house. She arranged for the temporary absence of the boys. She knew that she could not take her dear dead cousin's place; but perhaps she could mitigate the awful sense of bereavement; perhaps she could still the boiling seas of anguish with the oil of

commiseration, at least she would try. And try she did. So exemplary was her conduct, that when lethargy had succeeded agitation, that is to say the day after the funeral, Mrs. Clenton was moved to indite a letter to her father in which woe, gratitude, and finance were curiously commingled.

Among other things the good widow wrote: "She has been all in all to me in this my latest and severest visitation. How I envy you the having of sich a jewel. She puts me in mind so of your Ruth who long sence went before and with whom my precious one now chants heavenly strains beyend all telling. The price of staples and all sorts of garding sass is dreadful high. How I'm going to get through the winter and that with hired help, I don't see, etc." And so pleased was the father to receive this account of his daughter's piety, that his heart bubbled with generous impulses; and the check which he promptly remitted afforded quite a handsome surplus after the payment of those outlays with which a decent pride encumbered the sad event.

Marcia enjoyed her new rôle as a sister of charity most thoroughly, as long as it lasted; and she carefully provided that its continuance did not exceed her caprice. By means of a little exertion and a little apparent self-abnegation, she gained celebrity and praise. She acquired a reputation for godliness and purity that would withstand the assaults of ocular proof. For by her cajolery, she had permanently retained in her favor all the gossips of the vicinity. And she shrewdly suspected, that such a reputation, so sustained, might perhaps in the future become a very fortress in time of trouble. Besides, such conduct was appropriate and seemly, and she had always possessed a strong incli-

nation towards the proprieties of life. Decorum in her sight covered a multitude of sins. The interior of the sepulchre might be as foul as is the Ganges below Calcutta; if only it were completely shrouded by the gleaming white marble. She alone knew her own character; for the one who had shared that knowledge with her had passed beyond the necessity of calculation. She understood, too, how to weave the web that enveloped it; and most skilfully did she mesh each thread.

But, beyond these considerations, there still remained one preëminent advantage, and that was that she gained a temporary respite from embarrassments which were thickening about her. As soon as she had learned of her cousin's demise, she had sent for Jonas, and had said to him, so sweetly, so sadly: "Now, dearie, we must be separate for a few days. I have my duty to perform here, and no thought even must obtrude upon it. I cannot bring my joy into this house of mourning. It is very hard, for I do so yearn for your sympathy, but it is right. You will be enshrined here," and she laid her hand over her heart. "And when I close my eyes at night, I will see you."

Jonas bowed in submission before such goodness; and went upon his way rejoicing in the blessings that had been showered upon him. She thus obtained a few days in which to consider, and to endeavor to avoid the hurry of events. She was afraid. Fear had seized her and was mastering her; and she, who had never known sorrow, nor regret, nor remorse, was hourly yielding to the most vulgar and ignoble of passions. Never before, in her experience with men, had she met so earnest, so determined a spirit as Jonas. She now appreciated that she had heedlessly kindled a

great conflagration, and she trembled before its resistless sweep. Nor could she justly claim that the spark had been self-combustible. He had been personally repugnant to her since she had known him. Accident had formed their acquaintanceship, and wantonness had continued it. Before he had ventured upon uttering his vows, she had controlled him at arm's length. She had aroused his animal nature, and then had quenched its ardor by appealing to his spiritual calling. She had adroitly used his offer of advice and admonition as a shield, which she interposed between them whenever the priest attempted to become the lover. And there had been a certain feline enjoyment in thus cozening and torturing him. For, if the doctrine of Metempsychosis had other than a fabled foundation, Marcia had, either in the ebbless past, purred with contentment as grimalkin, sleek, and sinuous, and stealthy; and with paw of velvet had tantalized the wretched mouse; or she would in the boundless future.

Her plan, if the unreflected caprice of an idle brain could be so designated, had been to hold him in uncertainty, and suspense, and restraint, until her visit terminated, and then to leave him a jest unto himself. So George had advised her, and so she had determined. Yet so powerful were the forces of malice within her, that no later than an hour after she had matured this discreet resolution, the temptation, arising from the contiguity of Naomi and Jonas and herself within earshot of the hammock, had overcome her. But her success had proved to be her undoing. Jonas, hesitating between doubt, and fear, and hope, and hampered by natural timidity and dread of ridicule, was far different from Jonas in the full flush of the realization of his supremest desires. His self-confidence increased daily.

He became bold, boisterous and boastful. Upon itself did his conceit feed, and grow fat.

His passion became oppressive, and its manifestations were singularly disagreeable and obnoxious to her. He was so strong, and he hurt her so in his rough lubberly embrace! One would imagine that he was wrestling with a giant! Then his face grew so red, and his eyes bulged so from their sockets, and the pores of the skin, from which moisture exuded, were so coarse! His very joy was grotesque. He laughed aloud, and his tones were metallic and strident. He snapped his long, bony fingers like squibs; and twisted his legs in and out of the rungs of his chair, and twined them together with the supernatural agility of a nervous contortionist. Moreover his conversation was most tiresome and opinionated, and as protracted as had been one of his father's favorite sermons. While the excitement of mental fencing had continued, she had heeded it no more than an oarsman in a race does a sudden shower. But now that they had reached the dead level of successful courtship, with no ambush to suspect nor trap to avoid, his monotonous and interminable flow of platitudes overwhelmed her with a tidal wave of fatigue.

Besides, Jonas had entered upon a new phase of his existence, like a reckless mariner who slips his moorings, and ventures upon a trackless and unknown sea. When a coward struts as a hero, or a clown, as a gallant, the change is so radical that his actions must be strained and unnatural. So it proved with poor Jonas. He had always been ungainly, and had fully appreciated it. It had rendered him reserved and silent and unobtrusive. But now his rapture was so real and so expansive, that he forgot his imperfections, and denied that they had ever existed. He argued with himself

that a man must be attractive who could win so fair and so noble a prize as Marcia. But he had won her, therefore he must possess fascinations hitherto unsuspected. Assurance, however, did not lend him grace; but, like gauds upon a blackamoor, only accentuated his uncomeliness.

It was on the day after the solemn plighting of their vows, that Marcia, having endured for an hour a homily setting forth with chronological exactitude, the arguments that irrefutably established the fact that his church was the only gate to heaven, believing that any digression would be welcome, and that excitement alone could dispel drowsiness, abruptly changed the tenor of his thoughts, by glancing into his eyes, with mingled modesty and candor, and saying: "What would you do, dearie, if after painful prayer and self-examination, I should become convinced that I was not the proper wife for such a strong and worthy man as you? I am so young and inexperienced, and the position is so exalted. What would you do, if I frankly told you this?"

Jonas grew pale, then crimson, and then pale again; like a human chameleon, of double hue, confronted by an unexpected danger. He trembled like the jungle before a tornado, and distress forced the tears from his eyes. His vociferations arose like the shouts of the Muezzins. She was his God! Should she forsake him, he must perish in despair! For her he would do anything! His faith could remove mountains! Come, let him know what she demanded! Was the prospect of the life of a clergyman's wife irksome to her? The little vine-clad parsonage should sink in the slough of oblivion. Did his religion stifle her? Fudge! It should disappear like breath upon a frosty morning;

and together they would tear into tatters his priestly coat and formal tie. Did she long for the pleasure that lay beyond their limited environments? He would sell his worldly goods, and they would roam at her sweet will, until they had drained the last glittering drop from the chalice of gayety. She should never wed another, he vowed it! He must be the man that she desired, no matter what manner of man he might be, for such he would become! He would kill anyone that dared to look upon her! He would rend him, as did Samson, the lion! He would kill himself and in her presence; and his blood should cry out against her heartlessness!

In the thraldom of his passion, he rolled upon the floor, and tore his hair, and clicked his teeth, and moaned like a wounded wolf in its lair. Then contrition swept over him, and he wept anew. She was his angel, his guardian angel, the essence of light and of holiness! He loved her so, oh, he loved her so, that memory and conscience and manhood were absorbed and obliterated! She had realized heaven, she had intensified hell for him! He was crazed by fond desires. But she was as serene and as passionless as was the Mother of God, when she received the adulation of the Wise Men. She must restrain him, and urge him on in his life work, and keep him steadfast to his faith. And he crept upon the carpet to her feet, and anointed them with his kisses; and, clinging to her knees, laid his head down upon them, sobbing like a little child.

Marcia shrank back in her chair, speechless with terror. What spirit of darkness had her folly evoked. She recalled the poor fisherman in the Arabian tale who had released the genius from his confinement of ages in the urn; and how terrible to him had been the conse-

quences. She remembered Frankenstein, and realized that, like him, she had created a monster, indifferent to reason and beyond control. She thought of Faust and his fearful fate; and she wished, as these doomed men had wished, that she had not tampered with the unknown. Bitterly did she regret her lack of deliberation, that quality which protects the counsellors of tyrants. Bitterly did she regret her cousin's death. Would that she were alive, she would gladly surrender him to her, and make clean riddance of him. But she had crossed her Rubicon, that river of fate, and, as is the lot of all poor mortals, she must press forward nor glance backward, lest her next step should find no sure footing. So she caressed and soothed him with the balm of affection, assuring him that her doubt had only arisen from her earnest desire to perform her entire duty, and from her humility and sense of unworthiness. And he listened with pampered ears, rolling the sweet flatteries about in his memory, as precious morsels for future digestion; and sought his lonely apartments, no longer lonely since her gracious presence haunted them, saturated with contentment, and with delight.

When Marcia, the calm and the composed Marcia, whose lines had ever fallen in pleasant places, awoke that night in the solitude of her room, and watched through her window the scurrying clouds drown the stars, and felt the timbers quake before the onset of the gale which had rushed from the sea-board, she trembled before an overshadowing darkness whose gaunt outlines assumed a resemblance to Jonas, and for the first time appreciated her own meagreness and impotency in comparison with the mighty mysteries which spring from nature's womb. So, like the prisoner to whom the privileges of the court-yard are granted, she eagerly

availed herself of the opportunity for reflection which death, the arbitrator of many a difficulty, afforded.

Jonas was happy in the meantime; but his happiness knew no rest. His mind was concentrated upon Marcia. He wondered what she was doing, and whether she was thinking of him and longing for his caresses. He no longer attended his lectures, nor pursued his course of reading. He walked almost incessantly, and his comrades encountered him in the most unexpected places; but he passed them by without recognition, muttering and mouthing unintelligible exclamations. He was absorbed and enchanted. Like the opium slave, the enjoyments of his existence were contained within one object. Sincerity had torn away his artificial coverings of furtive dissimulation and hypocrisy with which he had for so many years warmed his complacency. Now, like a naked gladiator in his captor's arena, he stood forth, fierce, virile and desperate. Life had exhibited its greatest prize, and had announced that he was the winner. Woe betide the one that dared to dispute his title! He had gained the highest summit, and had viewed the land of promise, and he would curse God and die, before he would, like Moses, retrace his steps and wander again.

He revelled in his remembrance of her charms, nor did this remembrance simply comprise her serene and holy expression; but it included those adornments with which nature had beautified her sex. And these contemplations aroused within him that jealousy which realizes the source of its existence. He envied the stars, that peeping through the latticed windows of her apartment, watched her toilet. He envied the humble flowers upon which she trod, and the scarf that embraced her neck. Yet he knew that she was as sinless

and as unconscious of sin, as was Eve at her birth while Adam still slept. Love had transformed him, and it had not made him a better man. It had shattered his faith, or at least his belief that he had a faith. The natural man had overcome the spiritual man, and he remained Jonas the theological student, the calm, the thoughtful, the mystical and devout, only because he believed that this was the Jonas whom she loved. The force of early training, of precept and godly example, of study and research, had all yielded and faded away. One influence alone bound him to that future of holy living, and that was that it seemed to be beautiful and desirable to her. Apart from her he had no religion. His worship was merged in her. Nor did his denial of his God affect him half so much as did the thought that his nature was so base as to degrade her ineffable chastity by the sensuous vagaries of his imagination. Still he was happy, when he did not disturb himself with self-analysis ; only his happiness was restless, and as sensitive to his moods, as is the aneroid, to the cloud and to the sunshine.

So engrossed was his attention, that when he received from Mrs. Clenton the little note which Naomi had held tightly clasped within her dead hand, he did not attempt to open it, much to her mother's disappointment ; for she had striven to do so, and had only desisted from breaking the seal through fear of detection. Nor did he examine it when he returned to his room, but threw it carelessly upon the shelf, where it lay as neglected and forgotten as was the one who had written it.

It was the day after the funeral, that Jonas was walking along the shady river path, every foot of which aroused tender recollections within him. He had of course attended the ceremony, that most forlorn mani-

festation of rural paucity of resource, and had been impressed, deeply impressed, not by the look of candor and of peace that enrayed with glory the snowy countenance within the cheap and tawdry casket; but with the divine resignation that shone from Marcia's face, when, after the solemn words of the benediction had fallen like celestial dew upon it, the lid, whose clasp ever re-echoes despair, had been closed forever. She had raised her head, which had been lowered by sorrow, to glance towards the stricken widow whose hand she held and comforted; and a ray of light, stealing through an opening caused by the fluttering of the curtain, burnished her red-gold hair with the radiance of an autumnal sunset. She seemed to be in an ecstasy; as if she too had escaped from earth's confines, and was communing with the cousin whom she had so dearly loved. Such an expression revealed her soul, as the genius of the old masters, exalted by fastings, has given to the Virgin at her Assumption, or to the Mother in the agony of her sorrows. Now, while he walked, that seraphic expression haunted him. He felt that he had seen an angel; and he wondered whether the spirits of evil in the darker world dared to equal the sacrilegious audacity of his fantasy.

Where he now stood the bank rose high above the river, as if nature had reared a dike against the impetuosity of spring. But the fever of summer had wasted the waters; and they flowed sluggishly over the rocks where once they had dashed in cascade; and a white streak of sandy beach at its base showed how feeble they had become. Upon this lolled several of the boys engaged in the most gentlemanly and refined art and pastime of fishing; but engaged after their own peculiar fashion, without regard for the ethics of the

gentle Walton. Half way between him and them there thickly grew, in a natural canopy, vigorous sprigs of willow and of alders which sufficiently screened Jonas from observation; while by pressing them aside, he was able to watch them, and to overhear their conversation.

Now one of the reasons why Jonas was so unpopular with the boys, was that he was shrewdly suspected by them of carrying tales to the faculty to their detriment. Certain it was that that august body possessed invisible and unknown means of detecting many things that occurred beyond the sight and the ken of any of its members. And Jonas was an especial friend and associate of Tutor Stanson, who of all his ilk was most despised and feared. He had the eye of a lynx, and the stealth and the cunning of a sleuth hound. At the faculty meetings he usually arrogated to himself the proud position of public prosecutor; and he gloated over his victims with the righteous glee of a Grand Inquisitor. He was wary and strategic; and the unexpected question, indicating the wisdom of a wizard, which he would, when matters seemed to be shaping towards an amicable conclusion, without warning unerringly launch at the devoted head of the poor culprit, generally produced a paralysis of confusion and discomfiture. Now the boys knew that all who fought beneath Agamemnon's standards were Greeks to the Trojans; and they did not wrong Jonas by their distrust. Many were the hints, and surmises, and deductions, gleaned by his unobtrusive scrutiny and attentive ear, that he and the Tutor had forged into proof against them. He regarded himself, from his position, as a natural and proper conservator of good order and rule. Besides he hated them for their boisterousness and uncouth happiness; and

his soul warmed within him with satisfaction, when he learned of a suspension or an expulsion of which he was the secret promoter. It was such a proper revenge for all of the jests and jeers which he endured, strengthened as it was by the conviction of duty well performed.

So, with the noiselessness of a spinster kneeling before a keyhole, he leaned over the edge of the bank, sustaining himself by the branches with one hand, and gazed upon the unsuspecting group beneath him. They were undoubtedly enjoying themselves. Fishing evidently was not the sole source, but merely a concomitant of their pleasure. That intentness which marks the true sportsman was not apparent; for they were stretched upon the ground in the easiest postures which were possible, and were smoking, actually smoking. There could be no dispute over this; for since the tobacco was strong and common, and indigenous to the soil, and the pipes were old and discolored, the offence was rank and smelt to heaven. Now the use of the weed was a high misdemeanor at Armway, a fact that lent to it a still more enchanting aroma; and counter-blasts had been promulgated against it as powerful as that which alone gives personality and memory to a king. Jonas thoroughly understood how great an infraction this was of the penal code; and his eyes glistened with gratification as he recognized the offenders as among those who had been the most persistent of his tormentors, the particular friends and cronies of George Dorne. Regardless of imperiling their piscatorial pursuits, and unconscious of the spy within their camp, the boys were laughing and chatting heartily and loudly.

"O, O, O, O, O, O,—I hear that Will Mason has gone to town to visit his O,O,O,O, uncle, O,O,O,O, over

Sunday," spasmodically ejaculated Jack Keator, who was universally termed "O, O," Keator, owing to a slight impediment in his speech which caused him to involuntarily intersperse his conversation with these interjections of wonder and surprise.

"Right you are, 'O, O,'" returned little Bobby Kelly as he re-baited his hook with the tempting angle worm which he had taken from the depths of his pocket, "You see he got his brother to write a letter to Prex from his father asking that he might be allowed the privilege of passing the Sabbath with his maternal uncle; and Prexy most graciously assented; for he has a high idea of old man Mason who has been in the legislature for several terms, and has never been accused of bribery. So Will meets his brother to night, and I guess that they will see all the uncles and aunts in Boston."

"O, O, O, O, he's a sooner."

"You bet he is. I wonder if George will be lonely in that little low log cabin in the dell without him?"

"What a fool you are, Bobby," interrupted Ralph Davis, who being one of the older boys spoke like one having authority. "Don't you know that George has been just crazy to get him away for a night or two. Don't you understand George by this time? There never was such a fellow, with such luck. Talk about 'Tom Jones,' why he was a regular sissy beside him. I wish to goodness I were he. He'll not find the solitude too intense; you can just bet on that."

"She is so innocent and charming," sang little "Bobby," as he cocked one eye with the wink of an imp.

"O, O, O, O, O, Holy Mo-o-o-o-ses I've got a bite," shouted "O, O," almost bursting in his endeavors to communicate this astounding event; and amid the ex-

citement attending the successful capture of the fish which must have been deaf, and blind, and decrepit, to have blundered upon the hook, the conversation temporarily ceased.

Jonas quietly and quickly withdrew. He had heard all that he wished to hear. A just Providence had delivered over his enemy into his grasp. "Surely a good man always receives his reward," he thought. George Dorne, the one who had treated him with the greatest contumely, the one whom he feared and envied and hated above all breathing mortals, was about to commit the most dreadful offence within crime's catalogue, a sin not to be mentioned among people of piety, and beyond all hope of scholastic pardon; and it lay within his power, without exposing his own agency, to bring the miscreant to judgment. Truly the way of the transgressor is hard! A great joy filled him to overflowing. At last his virtue had received the recognition which it had so long deserved! His love was successful; his just resentment victorious. His chest expanded; and his shadow showed him how haughtily he carried his head. Conscious power intoxicated him. That pride in himself which had sprung full-grown from Marcia's adulation gained renewed vigor. How mighty he had become, as valiant and as conspicuous as was Saul among Israel's host! He determined that there should be no chance of George escaping detection. He, himself, the man of God, would in the holy cause of justice haunt the vicinage of the cottage, and with his own eyes would behold the dreadful iniquity.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE evening was as calm and as beatific as is the glance of the young mother upon her first-born who cuddles within her bosom, and laughs into her face with the unreasoning assurance of instinct. Like the star of Bethlehem it promised peace and good-will. The sun had sunk without any bitterness, and its farewell had lost all masculinity. For its latest rays, grazing the very tops of the hills, touched the earth which lay basking in its smile, with as timid a caress as that which Psyche bestowed, when she, for the first and the last time, beheld the matchless loveliness of her divine lover. The soft dew imperceptibly descended, oppressing neither the tiniest blade of grass, nor the leaf of rose; yet toning and enriching the balmy breath that attended its progress, which the Mountain had exhaled like a sigh of relief and thanksgiving for the retreat of the glare of the day, and the coming of night with her enveloping cloak of darkness and of rest. The west trembled and blushed. The sky shook away the fleecy mantle of downy clouds that had half hidden its charms; and, bedecked with brilliants of fadeless and unwavering light, shone in naked splendor. The dreamy twilight slowly paced its melancholy way, accompanied by the murmured cadences of minor chords, and by those thoughts that lie too deep for tears.

Jonas left his room, and mechanically strolled towards

the house of Mrs. Clenton. He longed to see Marcia, though he knew that he could remain with her for only a brief period. He distrusted the gifts of the gods ; like one, who, possessing a magical wishing-cap, still fears lest its virtues may depart. His nervous hesitation had been so strong before that eventful day when fortune had extended her arms and had enclosed him between her breasts, that despite the vigor of his pride, and the exultation of his conceit, he at times imagined that he dreamt ; and though reason dissuaded him, still he shuddered at the thought of how terrible and disheartening would be such an awakening. He doubted the veracity of occurrences ; and while he longed to believe, he struggled not to do so. Thus his success became a scourge to him ; as is his untold gold a source of constant apprehension to the miser. This mood oppressed him, whenever they had been absent from each other for the space of a day ; for her presence, like a dram to an habitual drunkard, was the only stimulant that could retain and render permanent his supreme felicity. Like the Pharisee, he needed an outward sign to confirm his faith. He must have her picture, a lock of her hair, a button from her cloak, a glove which she had worn, something that partook of her, and of her individuality ; something that would tell him that she was his own, when she was far distant from him, when the light of her tenderness had faded away and the music of her voice had been hushed.

So he sought her, and he met her strolling through the quiet precincts of the old-fashioned garden, with the calmness of mien and sedateness of step, that might characterize a young and beautiful Abbess enjoying the freshness of even-tide within the high-walled grounds of the convent. She was dressed in gray, and her apparel

was simple, and clinging and devoid of ornamentation; yet perfect in outline and fashion. Her bonnet and her gloves were of the same demure hue. She resembled a Puritan maiden, the fairest and chastest flower that ever blossomed upon rugged soil, faultless in form, faultless in character, gentle and resolute and true, ignorant of fear, and unknowing shame. A rare type, that hardship created, and that luxury has destroyed. He appeared abruptly before her, and startled her; and it seemed to him for an instant that a shade of perplexity rested upon her brow. Yet it could not be; for surprise betrays the emotions, and the earnestness of her greeting, after his first words, dissipated the thought.

"My darling, I can stay with you but a little," he said. "I have a duty that calls me thither. Believe me that naught else but its sacred voice could summon me from celestial fellowship with you. Yet an instant with you exceeds in joy cycles of Paradise without you."

"I feel that you are all truth and sincerity, Jonas, and I trust in your love as I do in that which my father bears for me. I never knew my mother, though the dim memory of her fond face often grants enchantment to my dreams; and in the singleness of your devotion I realize that the loss of my childhood is now being recompensed. It was only last night, that she seemed to me to be watching over us, and to smile her approval upon our union. I too have a duty to perform which would draw me from your side even if you could remain. For conscience should be the master of inclination. Think of my aunt, my poor bereaved aunt, unwittingly awaiting in her chair near the hearthstone, the light rapid step that will never again resound. I could not withstand her piteous though silent entreaty. I must fly to her, and comfort her with soothing words and holy readings

from those old books of devotion, which have ever been her nearest associates and friends."

How like a self-dedicated Daughter of God, purified by the fires of abnegation and sacrifice, she looked as she pensively uttered these words. A deep sense of demerit humbled Jonas; and he kissed the tips of her fingers with reverent respect.

"You are so good, my love," he replied, "that it is a spiritual education to be with you. Still I will not detain you, for I too will be serving the right by hastening you upon your mission. But before I leave you, there is one thing that you must do for your weak, foolish Jonas. When we are apart, dark doubts sorely beset me. I cannot help it. I am so happy that my happiness seems unreal to me. I fear that it may vanish like a mirage, and only the dun, barren sands remain. I am like unto that King of Israel, whom moods enthralled; and your presence is the only Psalm that can woo my melancholy. Yet, since in the heavens to which love has transported me there must be partings, give me something to hold me to you, some token, some guerdon of my knighthood; for I am your knight, as you are my ladye faire."

"What a preposterous looking knight he would make," thought Marcia, "with his long, thin shanks rattling about in greaves, and the weight of his helmet tugging at his throat, and turning him black in the face;" but she only said: "What shall it be? You have my all, my affection. Would you bind it to your arm with my kerchief? You men are alike, victory loses its sweetness unless the enemy's flags are captured and trailed in the dust, within the sight of all."

"Nay," replied Jonas; "by me your name has never

been spoken. I have no parents, no kin. Nor have I friend, who is near enough to my own self, to share my thoughts regarding you. Only to my heart have I sounded your praises, and only by it have they been re-echoed. At such time as you may indicate, I will present my addresses to either your aunt or your father; but until then, as far as it rests with me, our love will remain as secret, as it is holy."

Marcia breathed a faint sigh of relief, which Jonas fondly imagined to be a tribute of suppressed passion. Events were closing so thickly about her, that she had feared that common report might forge another link in her chains. But now, since his tongue had not wagged in its gladness, there was no danger of this; for his attentions had not been sufficiently demonstrative to, of themselves, occasion public remark.

"I will give to you anything that I have," she continued. "I have no picture of myself; besides I detest all likenesses, they are so cold and expressionless, they eliminate the soul, and render permanent, in the features, the thought that may at the moment of their execution have been affecting them, even though it be so ridiculous a one, as the dread of one's back-hair falling down. No, I care not for them. It is the light of the eye changing instantaneously, the ripple of the lips, and the curves of the face, reflecting intelligent sympathy, that are the attributes of our dear ones which we recognize and love, and these cannot be counterfeited."

"That is most true. Any portrait of you, though Apelles himself guided the pencil, must be a slur and a caricature. Yet imperfect though it be, would it not serve to refresh and re-inspire the memory; as the revelations of the sacred word display the glories of the celestial city to the parched and perishing pilgrim.

But I care not now what it is. I must have something next to my heart that partakes of you. Bestow one of these gloves upon me. It has nestled within the soft couch of your hand. It has been pressed to your cheek, and to your bosom. The delicate lines, into which it has been shaped, and the faint breath of violets that clings to it will remind me of you; and I will know that she, whose instincts are so truly vestal as are thine, could never have granted anything even so slightly connected with her personality as this poor glove, save to him who held within the grasp of himself, her unfaltering regard."

"Take it, then, and may it impart a sense of the faithfulness to you of the hand it contained, and the knowledge that I am unalterably thine. And now my dearest, the waning light warns me that I must depart. May thy rest be as peaceful as is the descent of the evening; and thus I say to you good-night."

"Good-night," responded Jonas, "for all things are good, even the darkness, since thou art mine, and I am thine. But shake off thy leaden soles, O, time, and hasten blessed day that will extirpate all partings and glow with the rosy light of continuous companionship!"

He kissed her upon the brow, upon the lips; he carefully folded the little glove, and placed it within his breast; and with a sigh that seemed to weight the skies with its ponderousness, he strode away, like one who leaves the warmth of home, to face the winter's blasts. She stood for the moment gazing after his figure as it cut and dove through the gloom. "Poor fool," she murmured, with a disdainful shrug of her shoulders. "The rosy light of continuous companionship will never equal the dull glimmer of your solitary student

lamp! My weak, foolish Jonas! How I hate and despise you, and yet how I fear you!" She stood for an instant longer, as motionless as is the Sphinx in her reverie by the Nile; then she passed her hand across her eyes as if to brush away the visual embodiment of a painful thought, and went into the house.

Jonas walked slowly up the hill, and seated himself upon one of the benches that had been placed here and there within the grounds of the Seminary. He knew that his self-appointed task could not be commenced for several hours, and the beauties of the night enticed him away from his room. The poetical and romantic words of his mistress entranced him; and he longed to be alone, and to repeat them again and again in his thoughts, and to carve them deep upon the tablet which memory had reared to his vanity. Right truly had she said that no portrait could justly represent her; for she was endowed with the changing fascinations of the opal. How noble was her character, of what grave tenderness and exalted intellectuality! She walked the earth like a goddess, and her speech was fashioned with divine lips. Yet this creature of benign grace and majesty was his hand-maiden, his willing captive, chained by the golden links of affection to his chariot wheels. How wonderful it was, and yet how natural! How fortunate was he, and yet how blessed was her lot! Verily their union would be the blending of two harmonious chords!

The moon had arisen, and in the ripened glory of maturity had shamed the modest stars into hiding. No cloud crossed her pathway, nor dimmed her fulgor. The fields were bathed in her silvery radiance, and the little river reflected her course in a thousand sparkling lines of white. The hills disclosed the grandeur of their out-

lines and the shadows of their glades; and the mists, that had settled upon the meadows, were transformed into that wondrous fleece, which Jason and his Argonauts, in the days when fables were facts, snatched from the dragon at Colchis. "So may my life be," exclaimed Jonas, "bright, but not dazzling; serene and beautiful and beneficent, and as cloudless as is thy journeying, O moon!"

A languor, a forgetfulness stole over him, begotten by her mystic rays and the wooing coolness of the night wind He did not slumber; but sleep hovered so near that the soporific sway of its breathing seduced him into stupor. The scene faded from before his gaze, and then reappeared. The moon still floated in the matchless azure, and no danger threatened her confident advance; but from the spur of the dread Mountain, whose sullen obscurity scorned the coy trifling of her beams, there shot a dense, gigantic cloud of murky gloom elongated in shape, and from its extremity lengthening into branches of sooty horror, like fingers upon the hand of a demon. It rapidly sped towards the moon, so fair, so unconscious of her fate, it surrounded her, and extinguished her, and blotted and consumed her light from the sky. Then an awful blackness settled upon the face of the earth; and that blackness was the unilluminable night of despair. For ages it seemed to crush upon him; yet suddenly it was swept away, as though some spirit had commanded, and again he was walking by the base of the Mountain. Again the discordant cries of the crows rang in his ears; again he heard the creaking of the bough; again he saw the grewsome spectre of violent death with its grin and gesture of terrible significance; and again he felt the clammy sweep of that unspeakable, abominable thing

against his cheek. Oh, God! Could he never escape the remembrance of that scene. With a moan that was pregnant with trepidation and anguish, he sprang to his feet, and spread wide apart his eyelids, like one who had been startled from his repose by a piercing shriek.

Pshaw! It was but a foolish dream after all! There was the moon as triumphantly reigning as ever did Diana reign over the glens and the fountains of the forest! There were the fields still aglow with her rays undimmed by the faintest cloud! There was the old Mountain, sleeping in its grave seclusion, stern and frowning undoubtedly; but still sleeping! It was but the kiss of the dew upon his face that had so diverted his roving thoughts! Despair had not settled upon the earth; but light and gladness and love! He slipped his hand within his coat, and brought forth the little folded glove. The faint scent of violets aroused his senses with the potency of an elixir. Ah yes, his happiness was real! He held it and possessed it and would defend it forever! All of these dismal visions were but spectres, inane and purposeless, adduced by the stillness of the night, and the cramped position in which he had been reclining!

The clear sound of the village bell, striking the hour of ten, was wafted from the old wooden steeple in the valley below, to his ears, like the resonant tones of a sentinel calling the watches of the night. He trembled and shivered, and his knees knocked together as he started to fulfil his plans. He was chilled by the exposure of his long waiting, and his spirit too was chilled by the imagery of his dreams. He could not shake off the feeling of despondency, and the consciousness of impending evil which encompassed him. Encourage himself as much as he could, with thoughts of Marcia,

with assurances of her love, with the actual contact of her glove; yet that same darkness of despair still oppressed him. He summoned to his aid the forces of his conceit, the remembrance of the words with which she had sped him upon his way rejoicing, the sweetness of her kiss that still remained fresh with his lips; but even these, in conjunction with the talisman whose magical powers he had himself invoked, seemed to be unable to reassure him.

He did not, however, desist from his purpose which belief made a righteous, and animosity, an agreeable task. As he strolled down the hill and through the village street, his steps resounded with the solemn echo of solitude. No home-star of comfort shone from the houses shrouded in their own shadows, with windows thrown open to the early rest which the soft evening breezes bore to the weary toilers within. He thought again of his long dreary boyhood, how monotonous and how doleful it had been. From the beginning he had been alone, forced to seek companionship in himself, and to derive all interest in life from his own existence. Alone he had been, and now it seemed that alone he always would be. His future extended before him as desolate as was this silent street. Perhaps his nature demanded gloom and retirement, as certain plants thrive best when hidden from the sun. His union with one so bright, so cheerful and so gay, as was Marcia, would be as anomalous as the mating of an owl and a lark.

And yet it was to be, his dejection must admit that; she had plighted her troth in accents of maidenly sincerity, and her pledge lay against his heart. Come now, he would contend with himself, and marshal the facts that spoke in his favor. He was young and tall

and well made, he was wealthy and his own master. Grave men of learning and devoutness applauded his character and ability. The town-folk had always treated him with the utmost deference, and he had often noticed the eyes of young girls turning inquiringly and sympathetically towards him. Why, there was Naomi, whose little grave upon the distant hillside he could now almost distinguish ; she surely had at one time regarded him in a kindly light, before she had been contaminated by constant contact with the boys. And she had been naturally foolish and fickle, and not at all likely to be appreciative of him. Yet he remembered that there had been a period before Marcia came, though it seemed so far distant as to be beyond recollection, when he and she had associated together sufficiently to provoke many a semi-clerical joke upon the subject from his fellows ; and he had in no wise sought the intimacy. Besides, had she not written to him, and held the dead note within her hand when she died, which he had in an incomprehensible disregard of duty and of the obligations of true gentleness, tossed aside unopened! He would read it when he returned to his room, and perhaps its contents would give still greater reliance to him. Then, too, there remained the great unanswerable argument. Marcia was true, and she loved him. Was he so childish that the ordinary silence of night could conquer his reason? Let him not forget, then, that the morrow would surely bring the bustle of business and the tread of hurried feet. He recalled the frowzy, ill-shapen, unsightly caricatures whom he had often met, plodding along the road with a wife and children submissively following. And yet they had appeared to be objects of love and respect to their own. Affection was not a result that invariably sprang from

the same causes. It was a plant that flowered alike in the tropics, and under the frigid zones. So it must be that he, as well as any other man, and perhaps in excess of a great many whom he had admired and envied, possessed attractive qualities; and that it was not only natural but almost inevitable, that he should be the object of her unshared devotion.

He had been fortunate lately, that was certainly so. Here was this affair of George Dorne, upon which he was now entering. How proud he would be when, with well-feigned sadness, he poured into the eager ears of Tutor Stanson the dreadful details of this iniquity! How happy he would be when he heard the tramp, tramp, of the boys, as they marched to the depot to bid their favorite a long farewell! He too would be present; from the brow of the hill, that overhung the railroad cut, he would watch the train, which bore his tormentor forever away; and he would bless every turn of the wheel and stroke of the piston. So his mind vacillated from one thought to another with unregulated rapidity, racked and upset by conflicting emotions to an extent which would have horrified the placid, dignified, unpretentious Jonas, of a year ago, could he have then foreseen it.

He had reached the river and had turned upon its path. Oh, that dear, familiar walk! Each fragment of its trodden sod was sacred, because she had stepped upon it, with that fairy-slippered foot, which the daisies had striven to sustain. The breath of night upon the waters smote him with the chill of ice. He dashed forward pressing his arms closely against his sides to prevent the quivering of his whole body. And as he rushed along, he felt the brambles and the bushes cling to his

clothing, as if they would dissuade him from his purpose. But he heeded not their strivings; though he afterwards remembered that they at least had seemed to be solicitous to befriend him. Through the trees glimmered a light from the front window of George's little house, like a beacon hung upon a castle's walls by a treacherous servitor within. A burning, craving, maddening impulse mastered Jonas. He knew not its source; yet he recognized its power, and yielded to it. He would ferret and fathom the evil which concealed itself within these walls, even though he tore their timbers apart in his endeavor! Like an Indian upon a trail, he darted from tree to tree, as though to escape a detection which the gloom gainsaid; and he advanced upon tip of toe, as though the echo was conscious of his design. and would betray him.

As he stole towards the side of the building, he could see that the rear room was shrouded in darkness, and that the shutters were tightly closed upon the window. Like a serpent that God had forbade to face the sun, he threw himself upon his hands and knees, and slowly crept along until he was beneath its sill. He cut and tore his flesh against the broken bottles that had been shattered upon the ground; but in his absorbing excitement he heeded it not. Cautiously he raised his head to the level of the lintel, and listened. Surely there was some one within! He heard the rough bass mutterings of George's voice, like the distant battle of clouds with a mountain crag. He heard his loud, detestable, jeering guffaw, like the sound of an artisan sharpening his saw, that had ever rasped upon his nerves and enraged him. And in responsive merriment, he heard a silvery lute-like laugh, the embodiment of a happy smile, the

ripple of a mountain cascade, the greeting of the lark to the dawn, and it shivered his heart as will poison, a Venetian glass. Had he become suddenly daft, and bereft of all reason? Was his judgment so warped, and his imagination so diseased, as to actually render him the victim of so sacrilegious a suspicion? With the wary stealth of a tiger scenting blood, he wormed himself around the house until he reached the entrance. Then, with the caution of a country lad advancing with hat in hand towards a butterfly poised upon a mullein stalk, he raised himself inch by inch, and peered through the half open slats of the blinds upon the window of the front room. It was unoccupied, and there was a lighted student's lamp upon the table in its centre. With the quickness of a camera, his eyes grasped every detail of the interior as pictured to him by Marcia, during their first walk by the river; the books, the memorabilia, the guns, and the fishing tackle. There, too, was the dreamy, old fashioned lounge, how capacious and comfortable it must be! But what, Oh, God in Heaven! What did he see carelessly thrown into one of its corners! His eyes protruded, as though they would pierce the space and become convinced by actual contact. The muscles of his face twitched and writhed as though the three Furies had seized upon him and were tearing him asunder. For there, in plain view, lay the dainty, gray bonnet which he had deemed a Puritan maiden might fittingly wear; and by it, the little glove, whose mate, against his heart, now burned like a living coal.

With clinched fists, the wretched Jonas beat his head again and again. The air grew crimson, as though filled with drops of blood; his veins throbbed and pulsated beneath his temples like cables shaken by the

blast of the tempest; the room, the house, the surrounding trees revolved rapidly around him; with the muffled roar of a slaughtered beast, he sank senseless upon the earth. How long he lay there he never thought, and he never knew. But it was the sound of voices in the apartment above him that finally aroused him; and he awoke from the kindly stupor, alert, and keenly appreciative of the situation. They were about to leave the house, and he must hide, else he would be discovered by them, and they must, until he should determine, remain in ignorance of his knowledge! He sneaked down to the fence, and skulked behind the shrubbery. A broad band of light shot across the lawn. He saw them standing within the hallway. He heard the shutting of the door, and their footsteps upon the gravelled walk. As they approached, he could read the tenderness that mantled Marcia's face, and the careless air of supremacy with which George strode beside her.

"I wonder what the romantic Jonas is doing?" he heard her ask. "He said that he had a duty to perform, and it must have been a disagreeable one; for his attempting it would make it so. But I imagine that by this time, he is feeding his poetic soul upon moonbeams, or soothing it by sweet dreams of love."

"What ever he's doing, I'll fix him before I go to bed this night," replied George.

Their figures faded away like ghosts at cock-crow, as they continued down the road. Jonas again approached the house, and looked in through the window. Upon the floor near the lounge, lay the little gray glove. He entered, and took it, and wrapped it with the other; and placing them both within his breast, retreated to the open air again. Then with the speed of the gale, like a spirit escaping from hell, he rushed across the fields,

over fences and stone walls, through the swamps, and the meadows still clad with the downy mists, up the steep hill and into the dark portals, never slackening, nor glancing to the right nor to the left, until he was locked within his lonely room.

CHAPTER XIV.

JONAS gazed about him with the puzzled air of a stranger, when he entered the apartment where he had lived for so long a time. The lamp upon his desk was lighted, and its gentle heat had softened the chill which had followed the night. There was a store of periodicals and magazines neatly piled near by it; there was a formidable mass of manuscript carefully arranged within a broad wicker basket; and upon table and chairs and shelves, were books, well thumbed, well used, yet looking very friendly and as though they were feeling very much at ease. There was a scholarly atmosphere about the old room, combined with that neatness and particularity which denotes the care of a spinster. Everything was so scrupulously clean and nice, and placed with such order and definiteness. The ample blotter upon the desk was spotless; and the big brass inkstand shone with the polish of its days of vanity within the shop window. Even the linen upon the bed, and the scarf upon the bureau was folded and adjusted with prim precision. For the sober bachelor is far more finical than his unwedded sister of equal age. Yet the easy-chair with its abundant cushions, the foot-rest stationed conveniently near, and flanked by widely spread and easily yielding slippers of a generous capacity, all extended a hearty welcome home to him.

But it seemed to Jonas that these concomitants of cul-

ture and comfort belonged to another existence, and were utterly foreign to the one that he was now enduring. He felt that the old past in which he had here lived, and slept, and read and mused, with the tranquillity and freedom of a hermit, had been scorched and swept away by the consuming fires of a fatal passion. Yet he had instinctively sought his room, as a wild beast seeks its lair, scenting danger in the air, and fleeing for a place of refuge. At first, no sensation thrilled him save the sense of safety from the onslaught of fate. He was like a hapless swimmer who had been caught in the mighty undertow, and had been beaten and buffeted by the waves, until, through happy chance, he had gained the kindly sands. Then a feeling of regret encompassed him that his swoon had not outlived time; for he feared the approach of meditation. Were he only like the kine devoid of memory, that hateful gift of evil, he would so gladly stretch his limbs beside their warm and sleek bodies, and like them sleep without dreaming; for he was so weary, and consciousness was so frightful. He appreciated, however, that rest would never again oppress his eyelids, unless he surrendered himself into eternal captivity.

He stepped to the high antique shelf, and leaning his elbows upon it, peered into the mirror that hung above it. Who was the miserable wretch whose face was reflected back to him with such ghastly vividness? Who was this unkempt, dishevelled, dirty, pitiable object, with twitching and distorted countenance, with eyelids swollen and inflamed, and bitten lips from which the blood was slowly oozing? He looked upon himself with dismay. Where was the raiment which he had donned with such proper pride in its clerical cut! The clothing, that hung in shreds about him, was slashed

and torn by the broken glass and the pickets and brambles, and soiled and discolored with muck and with gore. He looked upon his hands, which he had always preserved in the whiteness befitting benediction; they were blackened and bruised and bleeding. The high, closely setting vest was open and buttonless; his gaiters and his decent hose were ruined with the mire; his neckwear and black-silk watch-guard were wrenched away. Upon the shelf there was a little portrait of himself taken when he had first entered the Armway Seminary. He studied it with dull amazement. Where was the Jonas who beamed so placidly from its frame, the self-content, retiring Jonas, so dapper, so proper, so good! Gone, forever gone; as dead as were the hopes of those who had so painfully builded the tower of Babel!

As he dropped the picture with a despairing groan, he noticed the little missive from Naomi, which he had so cruelly neglected, and which now lay before him like a leaf shaken by a Sibyl from the tree of fate. He knew that a voice from the other world spoke unto him, and that whatever it communicated would be truth. With reluctant awe he looked upon it, dreading to touch it and to break the seal that death had stamped upon it; yet impelled by an irresistible impulse to learn its contents. Why had the last fleeting thoughts of this poor girl been concentrated upon him! What had he been to her but a ribald jest! He recalled all of her cruel, heartless sayings which Marcia had repeated to him. Yes, Marcia alone had repeated them; and he had been insensate enough to believe her! Believe her! he had trusted her far more than he had the Almighty; for at her nod he would have said, there is no God! But now belief was dead, belief in Marcia, belief in a protecting Deity. Why should he conjure up her false, malicious

inventions? He would read the note; for had he not been held by a spell more fatal than ever Circe or the Sirens wove with waving hands, and transcendent harmonies, he would have read it when he had received it. How could he have been so heartless as to toss away with contempt, the message which the grave itself had spared!

He broke the seal, and held the paper to the light. Faint, trembling lines they were, penned by agony and extreme prostration; yet distinct with a purpose that must be fulfilled. He slowly spelt out the letters. There was only a single word, "Delilah." What could she mean, what significance could this convey? His dulled brain throbbed with the attempt to remember, and to decipher. Nothing could better exemplify the mental condition of the man, than his struggles to recognize the purport of this name, as familiar to him in all of its relative connections as was his own. At length the light broke across his bewildered mind. He groaned, and sinking upon a settle, which he had always proudly considered to be a counterpart of those that were used by worshippers in old St. Paul's at London, he hid his face within his hands in a convulsion of shame and of poignant regret.

Like a vision of heaven to a parched soul in the gulf below, the scenes of that eventful day so proudly passed were pictured before him. Again with trembling knees and uncertain voice he stood within the old pulpit, the first rostrum of many a famous divine, and read the story of Samson from the book of Judges. Again he falteringly repeated his text, "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Again he opened the sombrous leather case, in which he had so carefully arranged his precious manuscript, and uttered

the words of his exordium. Again the black letters darted hither and thither before his gaze, like renegade soldiers deserting their posts in time of danger, and breaking the ranks into confusion. Again memory refused to recall the well-conned sentences that were as familiar to him as were the lines of his mother's favorite hymn. Again he saw the expectant audience roll like an immense wave, and from a dizzy height threaten to overwhelm him. Again he caught the steady light of confidence and encouragement which gleamed from the kindly, girlish face within the Clenton pew. And again he braced himself like a man who encounters lions upon his pathway, but who still advances with intrepidity upon his journey; and addressing himself solely to her, speedily regained his self-possession. How silent was the great congregation as he boldly challenged evil with his ringing denunciations and fearless asseverations! Not another sound could be heard save the rustle and flapping of the huge palm leaves, stirring the heavy air. And when the last page was reached, and the black cover announced to the sleepy little boys that the season of their probation had nearly expired; how thankfully had he expressed, by his glance, the gratitude which he entertained towards her!

"A powerful sermon," the old professor had said, when the exercises were over and they had slowly walked together in the direction of the Seminary, the retiring throng deferentially yielding precedence to them. "A sublime sermon! But how did so young a man as you gain such insight into temptations peculiar to the world? The discussion of immorality would be far more seemly from my lips. Besides, your denunciations are alike too comprehensive and too general. Much must be forgiven of woman, for she suffers the

pangs of maternity. The lily in decay is repulsive and tarnished; yet it is the fairest offering of earth to its God. I have lived for many years, and am now approaching the valley of death without fear or repining. I have studied the intricacies of creeds, and have delved into the depths of doctrines; and the conclusion of all my experience and research is that 'the greatest of these is Charity.'"

"My Master," Jonas had replied, "women are as mysterious to me as is the interior of the Ark of the Covenant. They are inhabitants of a country that is foreign to my nativity. I have known but one, my mother; and she, through suffering and resignation, had become an angel. But my reading has convinced me that they are the enemies of our bodies and of our souls. Original sin has been preserved by them as an heir-loom, and the serpent's poison still rankles in their blood; nor can it be expelled, except as in the one case of which I have spoken, by the exorcism of constant prayer. The admonitions of the old Fathers, voiced from their caves and huts in the wilderness, whither they had fled lest the song of the harlot might contaminate their souls' communion with God, rang through my ears as I wrote my discourse, and guided my pen."

"Oh, fool! Oh, doubly blinded fool, that I have been!" moaned Jonas as anguish recalled these scenes and words with all of that vividness with which the lightning flash can, if it lists, imprint the landscape upon the naked rock. He arose to his feet and staggered to his desk. He opened it, and took from it the copy of his first sermon, which he had so sacredly preserved and filed away with such righteous complacency; as the priests of the order of Melchisedec perpetuated the precious roll of the Pentateuch. He read the indorsement, "Delivered

unto the glory of God, May 16th, 18—," and these words inscribed with the certainty of conviction underneath: "Mighty is truth, and it shall prevail." Ah, what an ass he must have been then, yet now his ears were even longer!

The thought crept over his mind, whether it could be that he was not the Jonas who, in such serene superiority, had indited these lines. He who had written them, must have possessed assurances of peace, and could this have been his perturbed and distracted self? Had not a demon in the depths of sleep ousted that tranquil soul, and substituted in its stead one that had been condemned to eternal restlessness? Yet the voice of the Psalmist instantly answered him at the involuntary summons of conscience: "I laid me down and slept: I awaked; for the Lord sustained me." Or was it the fact that he, the present Jonas, had always been the real identity; and that the sanctimonious figure of clerical conceit was but the offspring of hypocrisy and occasion? He could not tell. He had not only failed to read the nature of others, but he could not translate the open pages of his own motives. "Yet if so it be," he murmured, as he nervously tossed the sheets of his manuscript, "I myself will assert myself, before in the dust I lose myself."

As he turned them one upon the other, as an oracle might fold the parchment of his mystic scroll, by chance, that unworshipped power that wrecks dynasties, his eye rested upon this passage: "Oh, friend of my soul, twin brother of my hopes and inspirations, hearken to my voice which simply re-echoes the truth of all ages. Beware of the woman, who, with winsome words and gentle glances, shall steal away thy senses and stupefy thy spirit. Her caresses will gladden but for the moment;

yet they will deaden thy spark of purity for eternity. Beware, I say unto thee! Suspect the woman who dwells in the valley of Sorek, suspect Delilah under the most charming and innocent disguise; for her iniquity will be veiled before thee! Earth's flowers are most fair; but they are nevertheless of the earth, earthy! For thee, the stars shine in the calm effulgence of holiness! The universe is thine heritage. Waste it not to gratify the cravings of base appetite; for through chastity alone shalt thou read the book of the night."

And again he read these words: "Yet since it is not good that man should be alone, and since the divine economy contemplates that the people shall multiply upon the face of the earth; seek thee a helpmeet, a damsel discreet and virtuous, bred among the godly, and taught to follow the paths of righteousness. Let no meretricious adornments entice thee, nor the lust for the flesh that the worms shall eat. And if haply thou shalt discover the maid-servant of God, the child—" He flung the pages from him in the intensity of compunction and remorse. Oh, blind leader of the blind, how his very words mocked him! Had the dead girl loved him, and had he disdained her love? Had he refused the gem, and seized upon the bauble? Had her clear eyes detected her cousin's infirmities, and his mad infatuation; and even as the guardian angels were in pity bearing her tenderly away, had she spoken to him his own solemn warnings? Ah, indeed he had met his Delilah; and a poor, weak, shorn Samson he had proven himself to be! If he had only read the note and reflected upon it, when it was delivered to him, he might have been saved, though through great suffering; but now, the iron had entered into his soul! He was shorn of his strength of mind. He was shorn of his

hope, his confidence and his faith. Weak or strong as these aspirations may have been, and he could not now tell whether they had been real or unreal, sincere or false, yet they had in a certain form existed, and had comforted him, and now they were gone. What remained in their stead?

He was conscious of a mighty yearning and of a fierce desire. Bright eyes danced before him, soft, curly locks entwined his neck, and his cheek was fanned by perfumed breath. His unrestrained imagination pictured a vision of loveliness, of that flesh which he had consigned to the worms, but whose embrace it now seemed would render the joys of Heaven inane and vague. All of the wonders of physical charms exposed themselves to him, and whispered: "Here alone is thy happiness." He remembered the inscription, which the Romans, with blunt and concise frankness, had placed upon the lintels of their Lupernals, "Hic est voluptas;" and he now believed that they had written truly.

"Oh, if I could but hold her within my bosom," he cried, as he spread wide his arms to the disappointing air that delivered unto him not even the ghost of her whom he desired. "Then memory would sweeten hell for all eternity!" Yes, love still remained for him! Not the discreet maiden with carefully pinned kerchief, and demurely pursed lips, and folded hands, before whom he had reverently kneeled, and within whom he had not dared to believe that the warm blood of youth had ever coursed; but the Amor of the ancients, naked, shameless, smiling, most fair and most happy. This was the love that had so often scandalized his reading, and disturbed his contemplation of the etymology of the classics. Yes, Aphrodite still existed and should be

worshipped! She was no chimera begotten of sickly sentimentalism; but a sentient fact. Ruthlessly had he been taught her cult; and he would take full advantage of his initiation.

Crash went the window; and over fell the lamp; as a large stone was violently hurled through it, and across the room, smashing against a rare etching of St. Jerome, which hung upon the opposite wall, and irretrievably ruining the veritable likeness of the holy man. The scattered oil blazed upon the table, and upon the floor; and it was with the utmost difficulty, and only through encountering many smarting burns, that Jonas succeeded in smothering the threatening conflagration. When he had done so, and had procured the feeble light of the candles that were the outposts of the mantel in the antechamber, a scene of desolation met his distracted gaze. The desk, so primly arranged with its papers and manuscript and books, was a mass of sooty dirt and ash. The floor, so scrupulously clean, was strewn with broken glass, and stained with oil. The lamp, which had presided for so long a time over his studies and had attended upon his meditations, lay twisted and distorted, like a dead coal upon a ruined hearth. The rancid odor of kerosene, and the sickening fumes of smouldering wool vitiated the air.

Jonas flung open the window, and looked out into the night. The moon rode the zenith as proudly as an eastern queen upon her white charger rides at the head of her victorious troop. Her mellow light transformed the hour into a sunless noon. The Seminary wall responded but a single ray to her greeting, and that issued from his own apartment. All of the students were wrapped in the placid slumbers that reward the righteous, save himself; and upon him that sweet sleep

would never again descend. Down the hill, towards the village, he saw a figure rapidly moving; its shadow gigantically striding through the adjacent fields. The stillness of the night wafted to him the faint refrain of a merry song:

> "We'll kick him, we'll trounce him, we'll tear off his clothes,
> For he's only a Theologue, whom nobody knows."

And then the echo of that mocking laugh, whose taunting tones had so often riven his heart.

"This is what he meant when he said that he would fix me," muttered Jonas, as he slammed down the sash, with an energy that caused the fragments of the pane to ring crisply upon the pavement below, and stared about his room in a frenzy of rage. Now, besides all else, he had lost the home, in which he had taken such pride and such comfort! Well, so let it be! He would bury the past in the ruin of everything which contained a memory of it! He tore his manuscript, and scattered the scraps far and wide. He ripped the costly bindings from his books, and mangled their pages. He dashed his pictures from the walls, those hallowed saints and sorrowing Madonnas that had been shrines for his æsthetic taste. He hurled a sketch of his father's house, that bleak, barren, unhappy parsonage, whose influence had toned and swayed his life, beneath his feet, and trampled upon it. He ground into powder under his heel, his mother's watch; at whose brightness his baby fingers had picked, and whose value had seemed to be incalculable to his boyish mind. And when his passion abated, and he sank in exhaustion upon the settle, the well-ordered study, whose quiet refinement had greeted him that evening when he had returned, presented a

scene of wanton destruction, that only the senseless fury of a wild beast, or of a madman could have produced.

Yes, there was still another mighty emotion left to him, and that was hatred. Hatred, intense, fiery, unwavering hatred, that would pursue its object to death, and wreck its unquenched vengeance upon the grave, that boundary line of animosity. Hatred, that filled his veins with an infernal pride and exultation, and nerved his arm, and clinched his fists, and swelled his muscles into knots of iron. And accompanying it, too, was its twin brother, jealousy ; that insidious fiend who battens upon that which he consumes, and whose breath is more scorching than are the fumes which arise from moulten lead. Ah, indeed, life was not yet depleted, since it still contained such compensating forces !

He again considered himself as he had been before this fatal day had dawned, rich and cultured and refined, a man to whom all respect was paid, the honored follower of a holy profession. He thought of the uncouth, ignorant boy, as incapable of reflection and true tenderness as were the swine, moved only by fleshly desires, an inert mass of clay, a brute, whose endowment of reason scarcely surpassed instinct ; and he contrasted his own desolate misery, with his careless happiness. Could woe be more poignant ! Welcome any calamity, any catastrophe, any crime that would change and interrupt its omnipotence ! So, torn by three foul passions, lust, hatred, and jealousy, throughout the long watches of the night, with glaring eyes and fixed gaze he faced the spectres of his future, and hailed with delight their hideousness.

He contemplated life, and its snares and deceits and selfish longings, its useless struggles for impossible attainments, its bickerings and back-bitings and mean-

nesses and formalisms, its shams, and its counterfeits of honor and piety, its false friends and its false prophets; and he realized that in this supremacy of pretense and dissimulation, he had at least attained those feelings which are genuine and natural since they animate the beasts of the field. And what indeed was man, but an animal that ambition had rendered dissatisfied! Strip him of his artificial trappings, turn him adrift into the wilderness, and even the hyena and the jackal would shrink from him with shame and contempt! What was his existence, which he vaunted as being but a little lower than that of the angels, but a cowardly battling with remorseless fate, and an unceasing endeavor to force others into the van of the universal sweep towards the gaping grave!

He thought too of death, and it seemed to him, as Florida had seemed to stout Ponce de Leon, to be a land of perpetual health and youth, because it was a land of inertia and oblivion. Why should one fear the entrance into its territory? Within it peace reigned. No cankering care disturbed, no troublous joy excited. The rest of visionless sleep prevailed. He mused upon the countless millions who had played their insignificant parts in that tragedy which was never withdrawn, and had then left the boards forever. Had they been of sufficient importance to merit any reward except forgetfulness? What was the earth but a vast charnel house, and why should he fear evil within it? The impartiality and absoluteness of death robbed it of its terror. Was he more timorous than smiling infant, or tender maiden or tottering octogenarian? Upon all sides, dissolution surrounded him. The air that he breathed, the ground upon which he walked, the food which he ate, were all permeated with the relics of poor

mortality. Let him but drain to depletion, those passions which rioted within him, and like the poor beast, worn out by the monotonous labors of the tread-mill, he would welcome, as he would a Saviour, the eternal cessation from knowledge and from toil. No nightmare of pre-natal horror had ever disturbed his slumbers; his quaking of spirit had ever arisen from events that had happened upon the broad orb of the earth, and had commenced when he had first appreciated the repulsive fact of his being upon it. Certainly one bound of life was as calm as is a windless sea; why should not the other be the same! What torture could exceed that which he was now enduring! Agony is not illimitable. It cannot surpass a certain strain: and that he had reached. Even the Inquisition could only impose so many torments; and then its foul resources were expended. Moreover, how calmly sleep the dead! It was in the transient slumbers that the limbs twitched, the eyes rolled, and the hands clutched in terror and distress. Death knew none of these, its repose exceeded the calm of mountains. Its visions, if visions it possessed, like the circling waves which follow a plunge, would soon ripple and dwindle into nothingness.

He reviewed the harsh, cruel doctrines in which he had so firmly believed. It was because he had deemed himself to be one of the elect, that he had done so with such indifference. Now that he faced eternity with a heart that was black with evil desires, he appreciated its awful significance. Eternity, an unending cycle of cycles! What series of unmentionable crimes, covering every instant of three score years and ten, could justly deserve the punishment that, in his creed, without hesitation, and with all of the confidence that an axiom inspires, he had meted to each one of a multitude

as numberless as are the stars. He remembered his conversation with Marcia regarding baptism. Yes, he had even condemned to everlasting fires, little innocent children, whom hungry wolves would spare ; whose future, if future there was, must be most serene, since for them the past had no regrets. And it was his religion that maintained such monstrous and anomalous inconsistencies, more vindictive than the brain of a Mahomet could conjure. What possible comfort could it now afford him ? He would spew it from his mouth, and would believe, as he perceived with his sight, which certainly should be more reliable than some indefinite sensation called faith, that death produced decay, and that decay was the end of all things !

So his disordered thoughts rushed and roared and contended together, like molten metals warring within the swelling bosom of a volcano. The village bell tolled the fleeting hours ; but its voice instilled no lesson of forgiveness by its solemn warnings of the brevity of time. He looked out upon the slumbering world ; but no compassion for poor humanity stirred his breast. Nor did he think of the tender children nestling closer to each mother's bosom in vague fear of the darkness, nor of the weary men, who were deemed to be most powerful, yet whose strength, a little toil could so speedily squander. The morning light silently and softly stole over the hills, as if nature feared lest her wards should too quickly arouse ; but the marvel of its plan and constant execution touched him not with venerating adoration. He heeded not the song of the lark ; nor knew that unreflecting life, in twig, in plant, and in flower was shaming him by its homage. The east, the mysterious east, towards which mankind instinctively turns as towards the gates of Heaven, was aglow with radiance ;

but in its wondrous hues he read no promise of eternal glory. A two-fold purpose was doggedly evolving in the obscurity of his brain, impelled by the forces of his natural self. Within this purpose was fused all of his ambition, all of his intellect and all of his future. He waited but the hour, and hailed the morning as the herald of its approach. When the bells had tolled for prayers, and hurried steps were heard hastening to lecture and to recitation, then, like a savage animal driven by hunger in search of prey, he sprang from his room. The door closed behind him, like the fall of a curtain forever ending an act of his life.

CHAPTER XV.

MARCIA enjoyed the freshness of the crisp, morning air, the shimmer of the sunshine, and the glitter of the dew upon the foliage. She delighted to walk by the river bank in the early hours of the day, and to inhale the luscious blending of the chill of the night and the fervent heat of the noon. Her appreciation of pleasure was most keen ; but it was simply and purely a physical attribute, and recognized no condition that was incorporeal. She loved nature, as she loved her foster mother, because she had ever been kind and generous and indulgent to her. Every breath, which she drew from the alembic of creation, deepened and strengthened her life ; and this was most precious to her. Health was the talisman that had rendered her happy, and most carefully did she preserve it ; while exercise was a prophylactic upon which she confidently relied. Besides the beauties of the landscape charmed her ; for they reminded her of herself. She was most devout in her worship of her God ; but her God was Marcia Clenton. The deep blue of the sky reflected for her the cerulean splendor of her glance. The trill of the birds recalled the silvery chimes of her voice. The vigorous saplings, tall and straight and overflowing with vital juices, resembled her own glorious body, through which she felt the surge of her blood so powerfully pulsating. A stroll thus became the pious sacrifice

of the rarest unguents of vanity upon the shrine of her deity. The earth was her heritage and her native home ; and, as she passed down the country road which the village exalted to the dignity of a street, she appeared to be as beautiful and as soulless as were those tutelary divinities who had danced upon the sunbeams and dwelt within the hollows of the oak, and haunted the cataract's foam, in the pristine maturity of the world, when her womb was most fecund.

She seemed like unto the subject of Solomon's Songs to old Farmer Filkins as he watched her from the corner of the lane ; and to be far more bewitching than either Esther or Bathsheba, whose portraits lent a fleshly tone to his family Bible. He knew her full well, for he often sold to her aunt, the "truck" which he did not deem to be sufficiently fresh to send to the city. So he reined up his horses, and awaited her approach. "Gol, she'd liven a corpse, she would," he muttered to himself as he felt his cheeks grow hot beneath their grimy tan, and sun-faded whiskers. Most cordially she wished him a "good morning ;" for the lowly often pay the richest tributes of adulation, and rare ointments are transmuted from the vilest grease.

"Which way be ye goin' ? I jist hitched up the farm wagon to go to the old wood lot, will ye hev' a lift ! "

"No, thank you, you are very kind as you always are, but I need the stimulating exertion of walking, so that I may have a proper appetite for the goodies which you provide. Besides the healthful fatigue which arises after swimming through this delicious air, intensifies the joys of living."

"I don't know nothin' about swimmin' in air," replied the farmer. "I guess settin' is good enough for

me when I git a chance, which haint bin often these parst sixty year ; but p'r'aps you'll be through with your bath when I kim back, and then I'll pick ye up." And with a smack of his lips which disclosed the fact that his few remaining teeth were equally discolored, he drove away.

Marcia walked on, until she reached the rustic bench overlooking the river, where she had so often sát with Jonas ; and there she rested. The spot possessed a fascination for her. It aided her memory in recalling the incidents of her triumphs, and like a veteran she found the zest of her victories to lie in retrospection and in repetition. It tickled her egotism to review the wiles and the strategies which she had so skilfully laid for the devoted Jonas, and upon the very scene of the conflict she could most readily do so.

Yet to-day a cloud of annoyance dimmed the serenity of her complacency ; for she more clearly than ever before perceived that matters had reached a climax, and that from being interesting they had become alarming. Like the journey into Hades of which Virgil sung, and which she had heard the boys discuss, the descent had been very easy and alluring ; but the return, the retracing of her steps—that was a difficult problem. Like the child, who in his eager pursuit of the bird that he had wounded with his arrow, strays in the forest and wakes from the excitement of the successful chase to discover that he is involved within masses of thickets and crowding trees ; so she, the eager fray of the struggle having died away and captivity having been led captive, now found herself to be lost in a bewildering maze of fear and hesitation.

"Since I am so well versed in Biblical lore," she soliloquized "and have been blessed by the advan-

tages that can be derived from so righteous a preceptor, I will follow out his holy teachings. 'I will arise and go to my father and say'—well, what is the wisest utterance that I can make? Let me see." She paused reflectively, pressing one finger upon another as if conning a count, and with thought wrinkling her placid brow she slowly continued :

"I will say, 'Father, I have been annoyed beyond endurance, else I would not interrupt the steady flow of your occupation, by a crazy Theological student who persists in the delusion that I love him, although I have barely spoken to him. He has worried me with his importunities; he has dogged my steps, and rendered fruitless my good aunt's kindly endeavors for my comfort and entertainment; he has even ventured to insult me, me, your daughter, whose knowledge of men has been limited by my affection for your own dear self.' Then I imagine the law and the gospel will meet in bloody contention, and the latter will be speedily worsted; for papa's little girl is so good, so innocent, and so ignorant of all of the guile of this wicked, wicked world that his indignation will be mighty because it will be just." And Marcia laughed heartily and long, and as tunefully as breaks the echo of the hunter's horn against the Alpine crags.

But her mirth suddenly ceased like the song of a frightened bird that feels the mystic charm of a serpent overcoming it, for the shrubbery was abruptly parted and Jonas stood before her. She started to her feet and in unfeigned anxiety and all sincerity exclaimed: "In the name of God, Jonas, what has happened to you!"

No wonder was it that this young girl was so amazed and dumfounded. The night had increased and accentuated his woeful appearance. His clothing was

still torn and ragged, and spotted and dabbled with filth and with coagulated gore. No priestly tie lent dignity to his garb, nor decorous hat of generous brim shadowed him with its sedateness. His dishevelled hair in elfin locks tossed in the wind like the snaky ringlets of the Medusa, and his fixed eyes glittered with the fierce and constant expression of a vampire. From the tips of his fingers the black blood had oozed, wrung from its channels by the clutch of anguish. His face reflected the horrid pallor of death ; save the dark lines of suffering that crossed it, and the twin sparks of fire that burned on either cheek. Marcia felt her limbs tremble and her heart beat wildly within her bosom; that placid bosom, whose billows had never before been agitated by trepidation. She cowered before him for an instant ; as cowers the thief, when he unexpectedly feels the unyielding grip of justice fasten upon him. Something fearful was about to occur, she knew it, she knew it ; oh, if that dear, delightful farmer would only make haste and return ! Yet straightway she nerved herself like one who, confident in her virtue, undertakes the dread ordeal of walking unscathed over heated ploughshares.

"This has happened," said Jonas sternly, as he slowly drew from his pocket her glove and held it before her.

"Why that is my glove which I gave to you as a token and a remembrance of my love ! Darling what do you mean ? Are you ill ?"

For a reply, he silently produced its mate, and laid the one beside the other. Marcia's perceptive powers were most acute. Her mind could grasp minutiæ, and bind them together into a correct and truthful conclusion. She gasped, as if from want of breath, like one

who suddenly receives a dash of cold water full in the face, and sank upon the bench hiding her face within her hands, but not so completely as to prevent her from intently studying him as he stood before her. And there he stood, as impressive in his sombre and silent accusation, as a mute displaying his mangled tongue in proof of the indignities which he had undergone. Marcia never hesitated at mendacity, except when she knew that it would be of no avail. Then, like an experienced general, she did not believe in wasting her ammunition in producing smoke. She now appreciated that denial would not mislead Jonas, so she did not attempt to mollify him. Besides it was an ending to the matter, which but a moment since had been perplexing her; and in this regard she felt a certain sense of relief. Therefore, since he had played the spy upon her, she would punish him; and the truth would be the cruelest penalty that could be inflicted. He could not harm her by repeating it; for no one would heed his ravings, as his appearance alone belied his sanity. The spot was lonely, and he was manifestly desperate, and she was sorely afraid. Yet she counted upon the return of her friend the farmer, and resolutely cast her gauntlet at the feet of time, realizing that the force and bitterness of her words would at first stun and paralyze him.

"We thought that we heard a moan," she mockingly said, her eyes dancing with mischief, as she unveiled her face with the assurance of Phryne before her Judges. "But we did not mind it; for it might have been the wind. And so it was you, you poor fellow, and did you cut yourself?"

"Oh, Marcia, Marcia, do not deride me! Do you not see how crazed I am! What does it mean, and how could you treat me so! Have you no affection, no

shame, no remorse! Is your beautiful flesh the hardest marble? Is that tender heart as obdurate as chalcedony? Think how I have adored you! You are grafted within the centre of my being, and I cannot tear you away." He flung the gloves upon the ground and threw himself upon the bench by her side.

But she drew herself scornfully away as she replied: "Remorse! Why should I entertain so shameful a feeling. That indicates detection, and I am as secure as is the moon when a hound bays. Did you really imagine that I loved you? Why, I was only playing with you! The absurd talk of that childish Naomi about you piqued me when I first came to Armway; and I determined that I would prove to her that you were no different from other men, except of course that you were far more stupid and conceited. Do you suppose that I would have for one instant endured your tiresome and ridiculous proposal, and your loathsome and cubbish embrace, had she not been concealed where she must hear every word that you uttered? She really loved you, but you were too idiotic to perceive it. You killed her, and now you come and make fierce faces at me. Why you transcend Bluebeard! Think for a moment! Do I look like a girl who would willingly be shut up forever in a dreary country parsonage with you? I might better far be immured in a convent. I require air and freedom, and youth and health, and all of the joys of this joyous old world. Go, leave me! What you think that you know is but the idle figment of a diseased brain, the product of your ascetic and solitary existence. Forget it, lest, indeed, you shall be deemed to be mad or drunk with folly."

"Marcia, all night long have I been thinking, thinking of you. Have pity upon me! See my poor hands, how they have been bleeding, and think how my heart

has bled! I care for naught else but you. Tell me that day is night, that the sun is dead, and that the stars do not shine, and I will believe you! My past is gone, we will bury yours with it. I will do anything to please you. Anything to see the love-light again dazzle within your eyes, anything to again feel the soft velvet of your caresses. I will change myself. I will discard this ugly clerical chrysalis and become a butterfly, gay and giddy and youthful. People shall term me a beau, and a man of fashion, most fastidious in dress and in appointments. I will sell all that I have and give it to you, if you will only love me. Be my wife! We will fly together to the sunny land of Italy, and, under a cloudless sky, we will revel in all of the pleasures that this earth can afford. I will be reckless and rakish and gallant. I will drink wine; I will fight duels; I will astonish all mankind by a thousand mad freaks. You shall have robes and jewels most costly and rare. Nobles shall kneel at your feet; and kings render obeisance to you; and I will smile to see them adore you. Never before, never again, while the walls of the world beat back the sea, shall woman be worshipped as I shall worship thee. Command me, I am thy slave!"

He sank upon the ground and wildly strove to embrace her knees. But she coldly turned from him, as a haughty dame might contemptuously avoid the worm that crawled in her pathway.

"If you are my slave as you say you are, and by the way a more disreputable appearing one was never run down and captured by bloodhounds, I command you to leave me! You weary me! I never did like you! You are distasteful to me! Your love is fulsome; your passion is preposterous; your presence is obnoxious and disgusting! You, a beau, and a man of fashion! You,

fight duels, and drink wine, and play the gallant! Oh, your folly surpasses mirth! Did you never read the fable of the ass that masqueraded under the lion's skin? Go, seek it and diligently cogitate upon it. It possesses food for fruitful meditation. Fly with you to Italy! Its skies would be leaden should I do so. Why should I choose an exile more dreary than Siberia. You have no power over me. I care more for the tip of the nail upon George Dorne's little finger than I do for you!"

"Do not utter that name, that accursed name," shrieked Jonas, dashing upon his feet and madly gesticulating. "I must blot it from my memory! It maddens me! It burns my vitals like vitriol! I will forget, I will forgive everything. But come to me, if only for a short time; if only for a month; if only for a day. Then indeed will I obey your behests. I will banish myself forever! I will kill myself! My life is ended! It is a dream that has been dreamt! Yet a moment of such bliss would radiate its glory through eternity. I yearn for you, I need you. I crave you as did Dives the single drop of cold water. Be compassionate, if indeed you hate me, veil your hatred as you did but yesterday. Since the day when I first met you, and assisted you, and held your dainty foot within my hand, I have been bewitched. The gentle warmth of that touch thrilled and affected my whole being like a philter."

"I had not strained my ankle in the slightest degree. I only assumed that air of suffering as an excuse to entice you."

"But you were attracted to me, and you courted my acquaintance, oh, say that you did! You do not know how that thought comforts me."

"Yes, I was attracted to you, as a possible source of

amusement in this stupid country town. But you have disappointed my expectations, you have become tiresome."

While Marcia had apparently in perfect calmness taunted him, and had striven to divert his thoughts from herself to his own misery and degradation, she had been smothering a great fear within her heart. She was alone, in a secluded spot, with one who was insane through disappointment and mad desire. She hesitated at each step, dreading lest she might fall into a pit; though reason told her that her influence, and her self-control, and her sharp, cutting words were her best defence. Moreover, even in her terror, the delight of tormenting him fascinated her; and she could not resist the temptation of watching anger and passion and distress contort and agitate his countenance. This impulse broke in upon her guard, in moments of her most skilful fencing. Besides her hatred, which had been passive, had now become active and aggressive. She longed to blast him with the fires of her wrath. He had covertly and sneakingly spied upon her and discovered her. He had confronted her with truth. He had endeavored to acquaint her with shame and remorse. Her nether nature was as hard as flint and as unyielding. It possessed the softness of the tiger's paw; but beneath it lay the sinewy muscles and the cruel sharp claws. Her strongest and most natural emotion was self-adoration. She belonged to herself. She cherished herself. She gratified herself. This man was an aversion to herself. His words had humiliated and insulted her. She felt as though her matchless self had been exposed to a shower of soot; and she inwardly vowed that sooner than permit the pollution of his embraces she would throw herself into the protecting arms of the smiling river.

As she had answered him, she had closely observed him; and she could discern by the glitter of his eye and the increasing twitching of his fingers that he was rapidly losing all control, and that a crisis was approaching. Her ear was strained to catch the slightest rumble that might indicate the return of Farmer Filkins. Upon this return, her safety depended; and she determined to venture all upon this favorable cast of the lots. With breathless yet concealed anxiety, she awaited his words. They came, not as she expected with the blast of the blizzard, but with the sighing plaintiveness of a southern zephyr.

"I believe now that Naomi loved me," he said.

"Though it is beyond the range of my comprehension to imagine how this could be so, she most assuredly did; and she tried her best to warn you against my 'guiles,' as she called them. The very day that she died, she sent for you to come to her side; but I intercepted the message, and then whiled away the golden hours in a charming little picnic for two. There was no one present but myself and that dear, delicious George Dorne."

The storm broke. Jonas snarled with rage, like a wildcat worrying its prey; and advanced menacingly towards her. The faint echo of a sound that might be the murmur of the branches bending before the touch of the breeze, yet might be the rattle of that honest, old wagon, accosted her and nerved her spirit like a draught from the fountain of hope. She arose and steadfastly faced him."

"You fiend, you devil, you beautiful angel of perdition," he muttered; as the thick crimson blood flushed and darkened his cheek: "Do you know what I planned throughout the long, dreary night? I nerved

myself to endure the detestable light of another day by maturing a twofold purpose which must, which shall be fulfilled. Though the gates of hell, if there can be any hell other than this execrable earth, yawn wide for me; I shall possess you, and thus I shall be revenged! I realize now that you hate me, that you always have hated me, that you always will hate me, and that there is nothing that I can do that can magnify your hatred. But still you are your lovely self! Your eye is still deeply and tenderly blue; your cheek is softer than down, and more spotless than Afric's costliest ivory, or the virgin snow upon an undiscovered peak of the Himalayas; your hair is still a silky blaze of sunshine; and your form is the envy of Venus. My darling, my darling, loathe me, detest me as you will, I love you and you are mine!"

"Coward, and dull brute, and fool," she cried, "Sooner the sweet death which this babbling stream would caressingly grant! Sooner the awful release which the vilest, foulest, slimiest slough would grudgingly bestow! This, then, is my answer, as low and as disgusting as is thyself!" She spat full in his face, and eluding his grasp with the swift and agile grace of a fawn, she darted lightly to the roadside.

Yes, her lucky star was in its ascendency; for she heard the nasal "Gee hup" of the farmer, the tug-like breathing of one of his steeds which was favored with the "heaves," and the portentous rattle and bang of the decrepit wheels as they successfully surmounted the rocks which plentifully bestrewed the way.

"Wall," said he, as with a display of unnecessary strength and horsemanship he halted beside her: "Ye look as startled as a patridge. Be ye sick of yer swimmin' and ready to be druv hum with me?"

"Oh, yes," sighed Marcia, as she quickly climbed upon the seat, and nestled against the rough, yellow, season-eaten coat, which adorned his massive frame; causing his rugged, old heart to beat more rapidly than it had since that eventful day when he had stood with his Mirandy Ann between the folding doors of her father's best rooms, and through the mists of embarrassment had faintly heard the Methodist Class Reader expatiate upon the beauties of matrimony as expounded in Holy Writ by the lives of Adam and Eve, Jacob and Rachel (the good man evidently regarded Leah as a needless encumbrance, for he spake not of her) and that everlasting couple Ruth and Boaz.

"Indeed I have had sufficient exercise, and am so glad that you did not forget me."

"What paled ye so, ye look as if yer'd seed a speret."

Through the trees, Marcia could detect the white, set face of Jonas, and catch the fiery gleam of his eye, like the glint of an enemy's spear. A faint smile of triumph toyed with her lips, as she replied: "I was frightened by the screechings of a loon."

"Sartin they be skeery critters," continued the farmer, and recklessly goading his sons of the wind, they drove away.

Jonas ground his teeth with the impotent rage of a hyena, that the lion had driven from his prey. "I should have choked her," he muttered, "And now it is too late."

He threw himself upon the bench and, resting his head upon his arm, in moody contemplation watched the flow of the crystal waters. She had threatened to cast herself upon their bosom, and she certainly would have executed the threat. Why should he not do what she, a frail girl, would have dared to have done! They

seemed to be so cool, so refreshing, so alluring. How they would lave and fondle his fevered limbs, and what sweet dreams the music of their rhythm would evolve and sustain! They would bear him away in all compassion, and hide him from the taunting gaze of man, until he became reunited with kindly mother earth. Surely these thoughts begat no idle fears! They awakened a temptation, whose impulse was almost irresistible. For he had been so accustomed to stroll upon the river's bank, and to follow its course with interest, that he now regarded it as his only friend. Perhaps it might sigh a requiem over him, and God knew that not even the tear of hypocrisy would be shed for him. The little insects that were busied upon the ground beneath him seemed to dwell in good fellowship; all animate nature seemed to be paired as if existence was too terrible to be endured without sympathetic companionship; but he, like Cain, was marked of men, and was alone. Like Cain—Ah, of what had he been thinking! Had he forgotten his twofold purpose? In one particular he had failed, failed in the moment of his success; but was there no joy save that of the flesh? The hot blood again boiled within him, as he recollected his other determination. He stretched forth his arms, and found that they were mighty; and he gloried in his strength. The vision of beauty faded from his mind's view, and within his ears constantly re-echoed that hateful, jeering, boyish laugh.

Far across the fields he saw the Mountain; but no longer did he feel its frown, nor dread its influence. A subtle charm now emanated from it; and its rocks seemed to be as attractive and seductive as those which by their melody lure sailors to their doom. Its loneliness and massive power encouraged his soul, as though it were an exemplification of himself. In its profound

recesses he could effectually be concealed, and there rule absolutely and in peace. He formed no definite plan ; yet he well knew what would happen, though when, nor how, he could not foretell. The creaking of the bough no longer affrighted him ; it's voice seemed to chant, with solemn harmony, the majesty and the victory of death. No more that spectre face with terror haunted him ; but a grim respect for its contempt of the world inspired him.

With the undesigned caution and definiteness that often marks mania, he arose and unfastened his braces from his clothing. They were woven of silk, separate, strong and elastic. They had been sent to him at last Christmas-tide, by an unknown donor ; and he had often wondered who it was that had cared sufficiently for him to have prepared so pretty and so useful a gift. Now he remembered that a few days after he had received them, he had encountered Naomi ; and that, smiling and blushing in an incomprehensible manner, she had asked him whether he had received many presents ; and that he had curtly and absently answered "no."

Taking his large cambric handkerchief from his pocket, he joined the parts together with it, straining the knots across his knees. Then he bound this lashing around his waist, and casting a look of disdain towards the river, started down the road and disappeared within its windings.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE Academy bell had commenced its five minutes' task of summoning the classes to the recitations which began at eleven o'clock in the morning. Impelled by the stout arms of the enterprising and ambitious student, who, in this way, in conjunction with performing the painstaking task of serving the hungry horde that beseiged the scanty table of the "Commons," obtained the advantages of a classical education, it rang out merrily yet defiantly, as though challenging the daring to dispute its authority. But the clamor did not disturb a group of the boys who stood a little distance beyond the porch of the building, in the idle postures of soldiers relieved from duty ; for they had timed it too often not to know that the impulse of the last vigorous stroke upon the rope would furnish them with an ample opportunity to rush up the stairs before the activity of the clapper thus produced had exhausted itself. For the clapper seemed to strive to befriend them, and many were the marks that its last hesitating blow had avoided.

They had gathered from the campus where they had been indulging in a practice game of base ball, during which the skill and prowess of Captain Dorne had astonished even the most enthusiastic of his admirers. They were now eagerly discussing the glories of a wonderful double play in which he had signally distinguished

himself; when he thus interrupted their laudations:

"Say fellers, where did 'Old-Squeeze-'em stiff' leave off last time?"

This singularly inappropriate epithet, which George however employed with the confident pride of a Euphemist, was applied by him to a distinguished Greek scholar named Armstrong, whose erudition had blossomed and flowered into a most successful and comprehensive grammar that had become the recognized standard in many a college, who had been honored with degrees by universities, and with medals by learned societies; but to whom the necessity of nourishing a dozen "greek roots" as he was wont to facetiously term them, with which Providence and his tender spouse had plenteously endowed him, had assigned the ungracious task of sowing the seed of his knowledge and of his devotion upon what was, for the most part, indeed, barren ground. His nature was as simple, as limpid, and as pure, as was his own rhythmical scansion of the Iliad. He was free from guile and unsuspecting of deceit. His attachment to his profession was so single, that it was impossible for him to believe that others could regard the minute and painful dissection of the speech of the Hellenes with indifference and aversion.

He thus often became an unwitting prey to the cunning of the unscrupulous. It was really pitiable to watch him at such times exhaust the entire hour, which might otherwise be fruitful of failure, in laboriously answering some cleverly contrived question relative to the dative of the definite article, or to the distinctions that individualize the four particles which announce and usher the indirect discourse, that had been adroitly cast to him like a tub to a whale, by one whose strategy exceeded his knowledge. His interest pervaded his whole sys-

tem. It agitated his legs, as if they were treading the mill of his thoughts; it excited his hands into violent and irrelevant gesticulations; and it caused his head to nod as did the august brow of Jove when he was well pleased. And it was only when the closing bell had sounded, and a low sigh of relief arose like that which greets an allowance of water to a parched crew, that he dimly suspected that perhaps his learning had been basely sacrificed to appease the fears of the ignorant.

"If you intend by that to ask with whom Prof. Armstrong concluded his interrogatories yesterday, I will tell you," said young Thomas Ely who was something of a precisian in dress and in speech, and who had led his class without a break since he had entered it, a little boy in knee-breeches, a full head shorter than any of his comrades.

"You've struck it right, my boy; who was it?"

"Bannard."

"Let me see, Bartlett, Bradford, Butts, Case, Cole, Converse, Davis, Dorne, he'll skip every other one, in his foolish attempts at being tricky, and he'll strike me certain. I'll make a dead flunk if I go in."

"O, O, O, O, O, O, we'll get him started, O, O, O, O, on the probable site of Tro-o-o-o-y and he'll be good for the O, O, O, hour," stammered "O, O," Keator, as he glanced from the literal translation which he had been rapidly conning.

"Come off, 'O, O,' we haven't time to enjoy your spasmodic conversation," interrupted Bobby Kelly, shaking his head portentously. "Besides it won't do; that old ferret of a Prex has smelt a rat. I heard them all mumbling about it at the last faculty meeting, and he requested all of them generally, and Prof. Armstrong particularly, not to deliver lectures except upon extra days, when,

he remarked, 'those who love instruction, for instruction's sake may become satiated with it.' I was hidden within the case of geological specimens and came mighty near lamming him with a chunk of rare, red sandstone; but I was afraid his head might break it."

"I'll cut it," concluded George, "I can stand the mark and besides, I am tired and sleepy. I shall stretch myself upon the sacred precincts of the campus and have a sun bath and a doze at one and the same time. Like the well greaved Greeks, mine eyes are heavy with slumber, and I'd be well grieved if it wasn't so; for I'm happiest when I sleep," and amid the scoffings and scornful ejaculations which this remark evoked, George escaped to his beloved field.

The bell hesitated in its ringing, as if it were wearied with its own clatter. It ceased, and its echo was stilled in the hollows of the hills. The familiar roll was called which each boy could repeat from either end to the other; and a smile chased from one to another as there was no response to the name of "Dorne"; and they thought how comfortable he must be in his heedless repose, kissed by the sunlight that seemed to fondle and nourish his athletic frame, and fanned by the balmy breath of the breeze. Within the various rooms, the students faltered or chatted; and the Tutors snarled or muttered, as their different dispositions induced them. Without in the open air, it was as silent as were the streets of Pompeii, before the mishap of a peasant discovered its sepulture. Not a footfall could be heard; nor did a voice quicken the calm; save the confused murmur that stole through the open windows of the Academy, like the drone of bees within a hive. In the fields, the husbandmen were intently toiling. In the kitchens and dairies, the matrons were hurrying and bustling. The great elms curved their branches

over the gravelled walk, and no one strolled in the grateful shade under their verdant canopy.

Upon the campus, near the walk by the fence, lay the sleeping boy, wrapt in the sweet and tranquil slumbers of childhood. His hat had been carelessly tossed aside, and his head with its closely gathered curls was pillowed upon his arm. Again and anon the coquettish breeze would seize a shining lock and twine it upon its fingers. His lips were parted and disclosed his strong white teeth, matchless in symmetry and purity. A smile haunted his mobile features, like the reflection of a pleasant thought. Perhaps again he was triumphing at the bat or with the oar, and was receiving the plaudits of the eager throng. Perhaps he was returning home at the expiration of the long winter term. How excitedly he notes the familiar landmarks and dwellings which indicate his native town; and how sluggishly the train hesitates in stopping! How heartily his father welcomes him with slap upon the back and merry dig within his side! How the servants crowd about him, and each one proudly captures and carries away some one of his belongings! How the old watch dog, whose sturdy back he used to mount in the far-away days of infancy, frisks and barks with delight and slobbers at his feet! How the neighbors gather and express their amazement at his growth and improvement and evident wisdom! His dreams whatever they were, were happy and innocent. No stealthy scheme invaded them. No plot perplexed them. No ambitions disturbed them. No envies embittered them. Perhaps his mother's spirit hovered over him, and caressed his soul. His mother, who, from the moment of his birth, had unified and centred within him every impulse and affection of her heart; who had straightway idolized him; and in the dancing

joys of his bright, baby eyes had found her heaven. So he slept as securely, as serenely, as the little child within the strong arms of a faithful family nurse; or as the cattle under the shadowy trees, down by the brook whose babbling voice attunes a lullaby. So he slept, as sleeps the gull upon the bosom of the waters, ignorant of fear, unheeding the approach of the storm, trusting in the fostering care of nature.

Through the Academy grounds, like a fiend lurking in Eden, shambled the rough ragged figure of a man, whose scowling visage was set with deep tense lines that denoted the energy of a controlling determination. He looked at the clock in the tower, that much gazed upon clock, whose pointers had moved so slowly and so quickly for so many zealous and reluctant boys. The minute hand marked the half hour. He listened to the hum of the recitations, like the monotonous whir of a distant mill; and he knew that he had outstripped time. Like a marauder planning a burglary, like a scout disclosing a campaign, he sneaked with dragging steps around the building, and squatting himself behind the high fence in the rear, peered through the aperture which a gnarl had caused and waited. Ah, if that avenging power that in the olden days of Coventry preserved from pollution Godiva's chastity, had but again blasted and blinded! But the gods no longer govern human affairs. The dagger falls, the arrow flies, the bullet speeds, as rage directs; and no cloud conceals nor sudden darkness shields!

It would have indeed been difficult for any of those auditors, who, had with such rapt attention and admiration, hearkened unto the words of Jonas upon that eventful Sabbath morning, when he had so graphically depicted the lessons and the warnings to be derived from

the history of Delilah, to have now recognized him as he knelt within this ambush; and their belief in the consolations which religion affords, would then have, possibly, been shaken had they done so; but he it surely was, moody, resolute, and determined, racked and driven but by one motive, and that the burning desire for revenge.

From his station he could espy every person who approached or departed from the edifice. His eye photographed each detail of the scene: the grounds, the village street, the park enclosing the Seminary, the Seminary itself, and the window of his room with its broken sash like the blot of a disgrace upon it. Far beyond, among the protecting trees, he could discern the cold white stones that indicated the ground wherein the dead of Armway were laid; that unproductive field, whose title is held by Fate, within which the richest seed so speedily decays. He could distinguish the broken shaft, which Widow Clenton had so tenderly reared in loving memory of her better self; and he knew that near to it, unmarked, save by the rude mattock of the hireling, was the bleak and barren grave of her who, alone of all of the countless millions who throng the confines of the world, had held him in kindly and sincere regard. Turned to dust was that loving heart! Wasted was its simple affection, as is the blithe song of a bird in the desert! Scattered within the immensity of the universe were its warm and generous impulses! Love had been for him; but it was not! He had contemned its offerings, and it had departed forever from him. Like the Israelites of old, he had sought and worshipped strange gods, and had been justly delivered into everlasting bondage. He was heated with rancor, he was disdainful, unrepentant and unrelenting. If a Supreme Being existed, he rendered hatred unto him

as the Author of wanton and unnecessary evil and the Creator of sin and suffering; but if that pure soul inhabited the realms of knowledge and beheld his anguish, he believed that she pitied him, and most humbly did he crave her forgiveness.

He looked upon the campus, and recollected the day when there she had so fortunately met him; poor fool that he had been to have ever doubted her sympathy and candor after she had so nobly rescued him. Yes, there was the very path upon which he had ignorantly walked to his contumely. There was the stone that had so maliciously opposed his way and tripped his feet, and there—Oh, Christ! was so rare an opportunity vouchsafed him! There, lying smothered in stupid slumber, unconscious, unprotected and alone, was he whom he yearned to encounter, his enemy, his rival, his destroyer! He sprang upon his feet, and rubbed his eyes as if to make them more clear and positive for reassurance. It could not be, yet so it was; they did not deceive him! The Lord had delivered his adversary into his hands, and if like Samson he had been shorn and betrayed, like Samson too would he crush his foe within his dying grasp!

He thought of Judith! How she had without compunction or compassion slain Holofernes. He thought of Jael! How she had relentlessly driven the nail into the temples of Sisera. How noble, how grand, how terrific were they; and yet they were poor, weak, timorous women whose sex belied their strength! Their names would live forever; though they had basely betrayed the sleeping, and those who had confided in them. Still the Lord had prospered them; for they were the instruments of the Almighty, and so indeed was he. Had he not been led as by the hand of

the Most High, without will or purpose of his own to this very spot? Had not his eye, with unwonted and supernatural keenness, detected the identity of what to any one else in his stead must seem to be a mere shadow upon the field? Was not this scoffer, this reviler of the holy and the righteous, more deserving of punishment, than the idle children who had mocked Elijah? Was not he himself a more equal and proper champion of justice than two fierce bears with talons of steel? Fire and the sword were the portion of the ungodly; for so the Old Testament, that history of a chosen people, inculcated. "Slay and spare not" had ever been the injunction of Jehovah.

His blood leaped and boiled within him, like the waters of the springs from the bosom of Iceland. A fire consumed his vitals. His muscles twitched and knotted, as they had upon that day when he had pummelled the schoolmate who had so ill treated him. How glorious was revenge, the power to inflict condign retaliation. Love might repose in eternal slumbers upon the hill within God's acre. The ashes of passion might smoulder beside the old seat by the river's brink. But this force still existed, still thrilled and vivified him, and enraptured him with its embrace. Life was not a fatal and unhappy dream, bereft of all of its joys, since it permitted this ecstasy to encompass him. He drank great draughts of air in his wild exultation as if to concentrate within himself the secret vigors of nature; as did Antæos arise, renewed by the touch of mother earth. He cast one glance towards the distant hillside, fruitful in mortality, as if seeking her approval, and rushed over the campus, from which he had once been so ignominiously driven, until he stood by the side of the resting boy.

Yes, it was he; for such deadly hatred never mistakes! How soundly, how peacefully, he slept! How evenly his breast rose and fell, swept by no quivering emotion, nor torn by the rending fangs of passion! He gazed upon his face, unlined by care or disappointment. How its tranquillity ridiculed the impotency of his spite! Did that same deriding smile still linger upon the scornful lips? He cautiously bent over and closely scrutinized the supine form. The flannel shirt was open at the throat, and revealed the white, maiden-like flesh upon his chest. Upon the swell of the neck, near the shoulder, burned a bright red mark like the sting of an angry bee. Jonas could see no more. His rage overflowed. He seized the heavy stone, upon which the merry school-boys had so often poised in their sport like falcons on the wrist straining at the leash, and he balanced it high above him. Then with the furor of that elder brother, who in the morning of the world first affrighted nature with the shrinking horror which murder inspires; like Cain when he rose up against the unoffending Abel; with all of the fierceness and savagery that hatred and blighted love and corroding jealousy can germinate and foster; with all of the unnatural strength that the one fell purpose of despair can, at the awful crisis of its culmination, recruit and rally from the mocking forces of evil; he dashed it upon the head of the sleeping boy.

No sound arose except the hollow percussion of that falling blow like the echo of the first clod breaking upon a coffin. The dream that had awakened into gladness the smiles of slumber, and had rendered happy the hours of rest with innocent sport, flew like a dove, terrified by the fierce swoop of the hawk, and fluttered into that secure nest, wherein the shadows of all things that are past forever gather and cuddle. That daring

spirit again started upon an unknown adventure, but one, alas! that would yield him no boasting return.

Jonas remained transfixed, his arms still upraised, like one upon whom the Gorgon's head is unexpectedly turned. The instant that the rock, impelled by virulent and deadly energies, left his grasp, a revulsion swept over him with the rush and the might of Fondy's tide when the waters of the spring time swell and roar. Oh, if he could but recall its fatal force! Inexpressible horror seized him, as he gazed upon the twitching members of his disfigured and mangled victim. Little spots of blood had dashed upon his face and hands, and there they burned like globules that had spattered from metals seething within a furnace. The voice of all nature seemed to sound against him a note of warning and abhorrence, more dreadful than the alarm that spreads before the approach of the were-wolf. "Hence," it seemed to cry, "Breath, shelter, sustenance, support is denied to thee, oh, most foul and cowardly murderer!"

The view became weirdly transformed. The blue of the heavens, the green of the sod and of the verdure, the silvery sparkle of the distant river, and the gray of the winding road were all changed into a dark, dull, mottled red, the horrible crimson of that sluggish stream which was stealthily creeping towards his feet. Gone was the mad transport of revenge, rooted and annihilated by terror and remorse. Oh God, what had he done, what had he done! What tremendous nightmare had overpowered him! Oh, that he might awake and dream no more, awake and find himself lying within his comfortable couch in his safe and peaceful apartment! Yet well he knew that through some devilish device and cunning, reality, not vision, confronted him; well he knew that this clammy, uncanny cadaver be-

fore him was no translucent phantom. His flesh seemed to struggle to escape from himself, as though it loathed the crime in which it had been an involuntary accomplice. The marrow of his bones grew cold, as though it were chilled with aversion and disgust. Where, oh where, could he hide himself to drive this abomination from his eyes, this quaking from his soul! He longed to fly, as flies the quarry before the gliding goshawk; yet a fascination which he despised and feared clogged his steps, and bound him to this scene of doom.

Had this prone and bleeding body subjugated him through forces far more potent and mystical than those that Mesmer evoked? He knew not, he reasoned not; but his contemplation, against his will, against his trepidation, became more and more absorbing and enthralling. How majestic, how unconquerable was death! How its impassiveness and composure befooled and contemned him! Truly in his very undoing was George still victorious! Now as ever before, did he in his superiority jeer and taunt him. He had escaped from him forever, and was at rest; as safe as floats the wave-wrought ship within a land-locked haven. But for himself what remained? Agony, gnawing agony, that forced the dank prespiration to exude from every pore of his body, that straightened his wavy locks, that froze his hands with the ice of mortality; dread, encompassing dread, of human and divine wrath, of the scaffold, of the bleak and rayless hereafter! These composed the future which would be his lot and portion. What was the sudden and stunning shock of murder in comparison with the awfulness of this fate! The body had quivered a little, more in contempt and repugnance towards him, than through pain; and then had come that perfect calm. But he was alive and could

still think, must still think ; for thought, like the eternal vulture, that worked Jove's vengeance upon Prometheus, preyed unceasingly upon his vitals.

He was conscious too of that repelling power which all forms of life exert upon the destroyer. Nature was sentient and active and relentlessly hostile to him. He could scarcely breathe, he could scarcely stand. It seemed as though the very atmosphere not only refused to sustain him, but was striving to toss him beyond its bounds into chaos. The sod beneath his feet seemed to shiver and shrink, and the solid earth to heave and tremble. The little birds, that had rested upon the topmost rail of the fence and had so confidently watched over George's slumbers, now flew away with twitters of alarm. The overhanging branches of the trees, that had afforded for him so grateful a shade, now bent back upon the trunk in order that the glare of the sun might scorch and blind him. The conviction of the heinousness of his guilt settled upon him, and the despairing words of Judas, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," recurred to him like the admonitions of an intimate friend.

The body no longer attracted him. His presence near it was a fatal confession. But where, oh where, could he hide himself from the wrath of God? He saw the crystal course of the river; but no longer did its waters invite him with promises of rest. He feared lest it would refuse him the refuge of its bosom, and that an angry flood would arise and cast him away. Beyond the Seminary. he could observe the graves where the dead were sleeping. There surely might security and quietness be attained ; but angels with swords of flame opposed him, and they who had conquered death would maintain their territory against its heedless and wretched

ally. The fields that had ever smiled in the sunlight grew dark and threatening, as if daring him to attempt to sully their innocence by the pollution of his tread. Yet when his hopeless gaze sought the old Mountain with its forbidding gloom and sullen crags and gaunt ragged boughs, it did not join in the universal negation. No, the Mountain alone seemed to call to him and to cheer him, as it had an hour before when he girded himself by the river-side. Then he knew the significance of its summons and welcomed it. Now too did he realize its portent and tremble; yet while he trembled he obeyed. One glance, as if in forgiveness, he cast upon the wreck of his pride, which spurted blood anew in reply, and then he turned away.

The campus, the street and the meadows were still as deserted as when he had by his deed cursed the day. The hum still arose from the class rooms, and the minutes of the full hour yet faltered. No eye had beheld his iniquity; no hand had been raised against him. A glimmer of comfort lessened the obscurity of his despair. Perhaps he might escape detection, perhaps he might avoid the doom which the grewsome spectre with swollen lips and stringy tongue had so often predicted in his dreams! Yet hardly had the hope been conceived than it forever perished; for a wild, unearthly, piercing sound, now shrill and loud, now deep and low, tore the air with its vehemence, and beat the astounded hills with harsh and foreign echoes.

There had been such quietude, such peace, that its sudden and direful wailing nearly annihilated Jonas with the conflicting terrors which it produced. He believed that "Dies Iræ, Dies illa," had surely dawned; that it was the last trump that had spoken; and that the dead would indeed arise and behold again the light of

the day. He longed to throw himself upon his knees, upon his face ; and yet he longed to escape to those remote fastnesses where even the eye of fate could not single him. He furtively glanced again towards the gory body, half expecting to see the crushed flesh resolve itself into those familiar features which he had so hated, and the stiffening limbs spring into life and activity. But the inanimate clay moved not. With superstitious trepidation he viewed the east, as if anticipating that its gates would unfold and the heavenly host appear. But it preserved its serene continuity. Still that strident shrieking grew more and more vociferous and intense. Whether it was the work of God, the machination of man, or the voice of the devil, he could not tell ; but at length he regained sufficient self-possession to realize that if those frightful notes were actual and mundane, they would arouse and assemble at once even the deaf of Armway ; but that if they summoned him alone, and shunned the ears of all other mortals, then the spirit of him who had been slain was in very truth crying out against him. "Your secret sin shall find you out," flashed through his memory. The tremendous possibilities of the situation overwhelmed him. He fled, as flees the dastard from the battlefield.

Terror lent speed to his trembling feet. Across the campus he dashed, that scene of George's many triumphs. But now, he, whose lightly falling step had scarcely seemed to press the sward, as he had confidently swept forward to victory, was powerless and cold ; and for the first and only time his unsurpassed swiftness was matched by the fearsome retreat of his destroyer. A skulking, hideous figure was Jonas as he hastened upon his fateful journey. His head hung low ;

his back was bent and projected forward; he swayed from side to side as if he were drunken with wine. Over the fences, through the marshes, and down the valley he plunged; seeking the shadow of the hills and the seclusion of the brush; startling at the rustle of the leaves, the crackling of the twigs, the sighing of the wind, the lowing of the kine; screaming in abject fright when the sun shot his own shadow athwart his path. Panic-stricken had he fled from the Mountain, when the knowledge of violent death had first oppressed him. Terror-stricken and goaded by remorse did he now seek it again, hoping that in its mysteries, he could expel the sin of bloodshed which was rending his soul. And ever and anon that weird, hellish sound would overtake him, and curdle his blood, and weaken his knees. On, on, he rushed, like one who strives to outstrip destiny, though his breath came shorter and quicker, and the black specks floated within his eyes. The sun scorched his skin unto madness; he was torn; he was bleeding; and so weary and distraught! Yet on, still on, he struggled; until he tasted the essence of the hemlock, until he drank the chill of the crags; and like one who dives into a maelstrom, he darted and disappeared within the threatening obscurity that ever enveloped the rocky monster whose succor he had sought.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was two days previous to these occurrences, that Charlie Browning, while engaged in the hazardous attempt of eliminating the space between the third and second stories of "No. 3" of the Latin Commons, in the speediest manner possible, by means of a flying leap with the assistance upon his right side of the worn and polished balustrade, had tripped upon the stairs, which he had scorned, and had fallen in a heap upon the landing. When he was borne by his comrades whom the crash had summoned to the upper rear room, which had been the scene of the consumption of his midnight oil, it was discovered that Master Browning had succeeded in fracturing his leg in so complete and compound a fashion, that the surgeon, who had been straightway procured from Simpington, consigned him to his bed for an indefinite period; and, in order to ensure the fulfilment of his directions, strapped him there with a thoroughness and particularity that would have augmented the value of the Master of the Rack, in a feudal castle, had he been equally as expert.

Charlie, as all must do, succumbed to the inevitable; and, propped upon his corn-husk bed, passed the dragging hours in wistfully watching the boys at their play upon the campus, and in even envying them when in reluctant, protracted line, they slowly wound into the

Academy in response to the clangor of the bell. The wash-stand, from which the paint had disappeared several generations of students ago, was drawn near his side; and upon it were arranged some roast chestnuts, a half dozen of gnarly apples, a few hard-boiled eggs, thumb-worn copies of "Tom Brown at Oxford" and of "Verdant Green," and—*horribile dictu*, for such articles were contraband and not even to be mentioned—a pipe and a jar of tobacco.

The room, in any other building except a prison, would have been a closet; there utility would have claimed it as a cell. It was so small that there was barely space within it for the little pallet, the stand and the one chair, which, unlike the centipede, could not boast of a superfluity of legs. So small it was, that the doors leading into what was charitably termed the study, and into the bin where wood was stored, had been swung open before the furniture could be adjusted in its negligent elegance, and so would remain in necessary immobility, until the auction which precedes graduation, would again give them freedom. The inner sides, thus exposed, were ornamented with illustrations that had been clipped from many a periodical long since as dead as now was the intelligence which they had contained, and that had been converted from their original purpose to accentuate some local event; and with the initials of former occupants burned deeply into the panels with the aid of a heated poker, many of whom had since as deeply, as laboriously, and as fruitlessly, imprinted their names upon vainglorious tablets within the Temple of Fame.

Upon the walls was hung a class cap with its numeral upon its face in gilt, which was only worn upon state occasions and then with much pomp and satisfac-

tion; and also a soft slouched hat, which was assumed upon certain midnight escapades with far less ostentation and circumstance, because of its adaptability to being drawn downward over the face, and because it was the proper and necessary concomitant for such adventures, as indispensable as are fresh and spotless ribbons to Fra Diavolo. Another mural adornment was a framed certificate of membership in the Philomathean society. A society whose election was justly considered to be a high honor; for it boasted itself of a pin, that was mystical with cabalistical symbols; and of a secret grip, both of which were a very present help in time of trouble. Besides, its members weekly met in solemn conclave, and after weighty deliberation, decided all of the great questions of the day.

The one window of the room was widely thrown open. It had never been closed during Charlie's time, nor could it very easily be, for it was paneless and sashless. The rain and the sleet which it had admitted had eaten away quite a valuable expanse of the rag carpet in front of it; and had also made a mouldy depression in the rough flooring beneath. There was a looking-glass over the stand, in the sides of which had been thrust several likenesses; one of a gentle, sweet-browed woman, whose eyes seemed to Charlie to ever lovingly follow him with that tender anxiety which only maternity engenders; and one of a putty-faced little girl with her hair pulled back from her forehead by the grasp of a ferocious comb. This young virgin was clad in a white frock, and her glance was uncertain owing to nervousness before the camera. Yet about her had been woven a veil of fancy as magical in its effects as that which transformed Juliet from a sentimental chit into the epitome of devotion and romantic passion. For

she was firmly believed by Charlie's comrades to be a houri of matchless beauty, who, like him, was consumed by the flame of a mutual affection, which, alas! must prove most hopeless; since an ancient and virulent feud separated their respective families.

But over the bed was suspended his especial pride and most precious belonging; a gigantic horn, longer and larger than any that had ever before been seen or heard of in Armway. It had been constructed for him during the last long vacation by a friendly tinsmith, whose genius, hitherto trammelled by the necessity of existence and the meagre requirements of his trade, had in this instance displayed the wonders of its untried powers. In it he had embodied several features original with himself. By pressing upon a valve, its tones from shrillness could be very much deepened. There were also keys along the side, similar to those upon a German flute, by which the pitch of its bellow could be changed, and its agony varied and prolonged into minor refinements.

Now since he had successfully smuggled it into Armway, lying obliquely across the bottom of his long trunk, Charlie had not dared to exhibit its unrivalled virtues. For an opportunity sufficient in importance to outweigh the risk of detection, had not arisen. So that like the untranscribed song within the composer's brain, its harmony had not, up to the present time, charmed responsive nature; nor had he, in impatient emulation, courted the fate of Marsyas. The rule was now very strict at the Academy, and most rigidly enforced; for horn blowing had become an intolerable nuisance that had rendered night hideous, and an intelligent Faculty had unalterably determined to place their collectively large foot upon the practice. It had by them been de-

creed that expulsion should be the punishment meted to those committing this misdemeanor in the future ; and this Charlie knew referred to the blowing of horns of ordinary size, or horns of commerce as they might be called. What would be the portion allotted to one who was caught in so monstrous a violation as that which he was now able to perpetrate, his imagination failed to conjecture ; but the contemplation of the awfulness of such a fate deterred him from the possibility of incurring it. So the voice of the horn was silent and unknown, and its potentialities were untested, like those of cannon whose manufacture is completed after the treaty of peace is signed ; and as they adorn some neglected escarp or parapet, so it simply lightened by its decorative qualities, the severe and Spartan simplicity of the bedroom.

Charlie watched George as he lay sleeping upon the campus with interest and longing. How comfortable, how free from care, how like unto the child and pet of nature he seemed ! "He's got pretty good nerve," he soliloquized. "To cut and doze in plain sight of the Academy, but that's he all over ; and his luck is such that he won't be caught." He regarded Jonas with lazy curiosity and futile indignation, as he approached and stood over him. "I wonder what has struck the Theologue. How did he dare to come upon the campus," he muttered, as he noticed his erratic movements.

But when he saw him raise the base on high, and beheld the terrible rock descend with crushing force upon poor George's devoted head, he uttered a shrill cry of amazement and consternation ; such a cry as the phantoms of sleep will sometimes evoke. He strove again and again to leap from the bed ; but only succeeded in nearly undoing the skilful surgeon's handiwork, and

in losing his consciousness through pain. He pinched his body until great welts were raised upon the flesh, to convince himself that he was awake ; and, raising upon one arm, he stared at the ghastly countenance reflected in the mirror. Yes, he was alive and alert and in the full possession of his powers, and this unspeakable horror was real, was a terrific fact ! There stood the murderer gazing upon his victim. There lay the glory and the pride of the school, the hero whom he had with exultant diffidence called friend, whose kindly recognition, when he had passed the entrance examination, had given him standing, and had ennobled him. And now the cowardly villain, his vile assassin, was turning away and would surely escape. Oh, with so many strong arms and stout hearts so near at hand, would no one come !

Charlie writhed in impotent agony. He must do something or he would die with grief and with shame. Was this his love and loyalty? Yet what could he do, chained, and baited like a bear, by unavailing impulses. Could he not at least call some one? His voice had rung out loud and clear, yet no one came. But, God be thanked, there was the horn, why had he not thought of it before ! Heedless of the pain and the tightening ligatures, once, twice, thrice, did he raise himself and then fall back again in despair. Finally by a superhuman effort, he succeeded in grasping it ; and then, oh then, with all of the force of his strong young lungs did he give it voice. Oh, most adroit workman, oh, most astounding horn ! Never before had the air of Armway been so startled by such an extraordinary sound. It awoke the echoes of the hills into alarm ; it thrilled the quiet of the study and the class room with undeniable warning and command. He saw Jonas toss high his

head and arms in ignorant and superstitious dismay, and then like a frightened cur furtively slink over the campus ; and harder yet harder he blew, revealing all of the marvelous changes and contrasts which the maker had imagined and producing piercing notes of weird and unearthly discord. At last when he heard a door in the front of the house upon the lower floor sharply shut ; and a quick nervous step upon the stair, a step most familiar to him and to the other boys who roomed in the entry, and never before recognized by him except with dread, he ceased, for he knew that Tutor Blackburn was coming.

Tutor Blackburn was a tall, straight, young man ; a Cape Cod product, as rugged as are the winter gales that sweep its sands ; a recent graduate from a salt water college ; who was cursed, as he thought, with so fair and transparent a complexion that every transient agitation revealed itself in the deep crimson coloring of his cheeks. To see him conduct prayers at morning chapel, as it was his abhorrent duty to do twice a week ; for the lowlier a tutor's position the greater his share in such observances ; was, as George had once aptly said, "like witnessing a conflagration." He was well liked by the boys, despite his abrupt manners and speech ; for they knew that he was an instructor through necessity alone, and that his conscience not his heart, guided him in his profession. They knew that he was without resources, that he was ambitious to fit himself to be a lawyer, and they all agreed with George in his confident expression that he would make a "red-hot" one too.

The average boy in an Academy regards those of his masters whom he believes to be such only through the force of circumstances, with commiseration ; as the

young Patrician of Rome may have regarded the barbarian slave who taught him the learning and the culture of the east. Their fate seems to be so irksome and so bitter. Towards the self-devoted pedagogue, whom choice, not compulsion, has conducted into such dismal captivity, he entertains sentiments of contempt and hatred. The knowledge therefore, that Tutor Blackburn planned no such distasteful existence for his future, increased his popularity among the students at Armway.

"Has your accident so affected your senses, Browning, that you are oblivious of all discipline and decency? Let me assure you that you are,"—he angrily began; for he had always liked the boy, and was incensed because he so wantonly challenged his authority.

"For God's sake, Lanky, catch him! kill him! oh, don't let him go! oh, don't let him go!" hysterically interrupted Charlie, forgetting in his excitement the deference due to station, and addressing the tutor by the nick name by which he was familiarly designated.

"Catch whom? Kill whom? What are you talking about? Are you mad or delirious?" He replied, so unmindful of the boy's calamity that he seized him roughly by the shoulder, as if to arouse him from a nightmare.

"Oh! look out there upon the campus. See poor George Dorne, killed by that damned Theologue Jonas Chidsy, curse him! Killed, and none of us boys there to help him! Oh, would that I had died, before ever I had seen it! Oh, make haste, make haste, you stupid fool, or he will escape," gasped the poor lad, as half crazed with pain and mental distress, he broke into paroxysms of sobs and moans, interspersed with disconnected ejaculations of unique and forceful significance.

Quickly the tutor, thoroughly impressed by his fervor,

sprang to the window, and glanced down upon the campus. He saw that there was a body lying upon the ground, and that the whitewashed fence was splashed and disfigured. Could it be that those spots were blood? Could it be that there was truth in the boy's excited utterances? Could such a horror have occurred within the most peaceful and pious village in the land? He could not, he would not believe it; yet he instantly swung himself over the sill, and hanging by his hands, dropped like a plummet to the ground. He struck squarely upon his feet, but rolled over and over and then down the bank, through the indescribable debris which had been thrown from the rooms, until he reached the green and level sward.

In a moment's thought, however, he was up again, and rushing across the campus, shouting as he ran. Already from the back windows of the houses anxious heads were peering; and now from out of the Academy like affrighted bees sweeping from the hive, swarmed the classes. A murmur arose, that became a growl and then a roar; as the dead boy was surrounded by an increasing crowd of his bewildered and frenzied companions. Cries and oaths and fantastic expressions of incredulity and grief, and grotesque maledictions stirred the air. Who had done it, where, oh, where was he, that they might rend him into pieces! All distinctions of friendship, of age, of scholarship were obliterated; as harmonious components of a mighty impulse they longed for vengeance, and like hounds fretting under the leash of the huntsman, they champed and plunged and howled against restraint and indecision.

Tenderly the body was raised, and borne to the President's home; as tenderly as did the sorrowing Lycians bear within the high walls of Troy, the prone corpse of

Sarpedon upon their spears. In the doorway of the house was a little gathering of wondering women, and among them stood Marcia Clenton. There she was a frequent and a welcome visitor, finding, in the refinements of the family, extreme relief after the oppressive vulgarity of her aunt's boarding-house. So after the farmer had successfully returned her to the village, she had pleasantly lingered there and chatted. The confused babel of sound, pregnant with apprehension, which arose like the threatening mutter of a mob, from the approaching band of revengeful students, had summoned them to the entrance in nervous expectancy. Some fearful catastrophe had transpired; but what it was no one could tell or imagine. So thus they waited, like dames within the castle's gates, viewing from afar the war party slowly returning with pack horses heavy with the dead.

As Marcia perceived the muffled form so carefully upheld, a wild exultant hope possessed her. Had the best of good fortune occurred? Had that brutish fool, who had watched and insulted her, given up to the reluctant worms his worthless life, as he had vowed that he would do? Oh, that it were only so! Oh, if he who alone might dare to asperse the spotlessness of her womanly character should be this senseless clay! Oh, what a joyous severing would this be of the Gordian knot whose intricacies had so harassed her! And it must be he, for who else in the tranquil little village was so desperate and distracted. Yet why were the boys so wildly agitated and frantic with grief! Why should they display such emotion over the death of one whom they had ever despised!

The shouts became more definite and recognizable. She heard George's name uttered and re-uttered, and

passed from lip to lip. One hand limply swung by the side of the rude stretcher, as vainly as streams the flag of distress from the mast of the deserted wreck. O strong stalwart hand, with expanded palm, and joints enlarged, and greenish bruise that all indicate the buffet of rude sport! No need had she to heed the incoherent explanations and the tense expressions of horror. She now knew what had happened, as she well knew why it had happened. What had been his words? Had he not said that all night long he had matured a twofold purpose which should be fulfilled? Had he not failed in one attempt, and now had he not succeeded in the other? These thoughts swept over her with the bewildering hurl of the whirlwind. For once selfishness shrank and trembled in dismay, and lost the equipoise of years. For once regret and woe affected her. For once she appreciated that she too was a sharer in man's common inheritance; she who had always seemed to herself to be set apart and removed from vulgar care. But in the van of these attacking forces, was fear, fear for her own precious safety and life. "Save me, oh save me, he will murder me, oh take me away and hide me!" she shrieked; and her consciousness struggled, and flickered, and yielded unto extinguishment.

The boys scattered to their rooms, and then quickly gathered upon the campus. They presented a motley appearance which might have been ludicrous, had not lofty resolve dignified it. A few of them were armed with shot-guns of venerable and innocuous aspect, while here and there the horse-pistol of their ancestors was shaken in the air. Others bore bats, and hockies, and thick clumsy bangers. Each one carried some weapon of offence, and was stripped and belted for action.

"We will divide into two parties," said Tutor Blackburn, "I will take charge of one, while you, Ralph Davis, will be in command of the other. From what Browning said, the assassin, whoever he may be, for I cannot believe that it could have been my old friend Jonas Chidsy, fled towards the Mountain. Now I will make a detour and approach it from the east, and do you enter upon the west. We can thus beat the ground thoroughly and capture him, as capture him we will."

The boys speedily arranged themselves into two bodies, as if the tutor and Ralph were choosing sides for one of their sports, except that no laughter nor jesting arose. "Oh let me at him, if I could only lay my hands on him, he'd regret it," shouted Bobby Kelly, the smallest boy in school, whose anatomy was so devoid of flesh, that George had been wont to say, "You could hear his bones rattle when he moved;" but his earnestness was so evident that his words provoked no mirth by their absurdity.

Now belts were tightened and hats and caps were closely pulled over the brows, and then across the campus they sped until the fields were reached, when they divided, one party going to the right, and the other to the left.

"I borrowed Charlie's big bull horn," cried Bannard who was among those whom Davis had chosen. "And if we find him, I'll blow upon it. You can't fail to hear it."

"O, O," Keator from his station by the tutor's side, attempted to reply; but his emotion had absolutely routed his halting speech. Not even the interjections that distinguished him could he produce; so he silently waved in air a smaller instrument of midnight torment, upon which his ejaculatory peculiarity had often begat

ghastly effects, in token that he too would be a trumpeter for his band.

For an instant Davis curbed his impatient followers, and watched the tutor as he gallantly breasted the hill with his adherents closely pursuing like beagles in full view until they disappeared beyond the brow. Then "Forward!" he cried, and away they rushed. Over the stone walls they sprang as agile as crack racers before the hurdles, over and away; but even as they leaped the exclamation of sharp-eyed Thomas Ely arrested their progress and brought them clustering about him. Yes, a stone had surely been kicked from the topmost row and there, upon the further side, were staggering footsteps, as if some one had stumbled and had nearly fallen! Hurrah, they had found the trail; they would run him down! But a little beyond lay a swamp between the hills on either side. Through the middle of it they could discern a break in the sickly greenish slime, like the path of a saurian. In his supine flight he must have plunged across it, avoiding the circuitous route of the banks. How the villain must have wallowed in its nastiness!

The exultant line swept around the foul bog, and caught the scent again at its further extremity. And once more a shout arose, as Bannard stooped and picked from the high clinging grass, a cuff with plain black buttons. Upon the inner side he slowly deciphered and spelt out the legend "J. Chidsy." But even as the words of conviction were hesitating upon his lips, he dashed it upon the ground and trampled it under his feet; for to his horror he could distinguish upon it, little spots of blood. These proofs of the correctness of their search increased their ardor, and forward they pressed. How rapidly the hearts thumped within the swelling

chests! How the hands more tightly clinched the bats and bangers, while the perspiration rolled in streams down the flushed expectant faces! The pace was rapid, it was killing; yet with lips firmly set they persisted.

The way grew rougher and more precipitous. Huge rocks, and treacherous gravel impeded their progress; vines and brambles entangled their feet; and trees uprooted by the tempest opposed them. The trail had grown fainter, and more disconnected; it disappeared and no twig nor leaf, nor stone betrayed the path of the destroyer. More than one lad fell exhausted by the wayside; and in impotent wrath on account of his own weakness, viewed the gallant young leader encourage his band and still resolutely advance. Tender little lads they were, who, in moments of reflection and deliberate action, would never have been allowed to undertake such an expedition; but who in the whirl and turmoil of excitement had evaded observation. And now they straggled hopelessly in the rear, their clothing torn, their hands bleeding, their innermost souls raging with despair, as they saw the little group who still surrounded Davis disappear in the distance.

At length this company of stalwart youths reached the base of the Mountain and there stood, panting and foot-sore, beneath the grateful shade of its crowding trees.

"We will separate at calling distance," said Davis, as he tightened his belt, and knotted his handkerchief about his throat, "and beat eastward through the woods."

The line extended its encircling coil, with Bannard, still grasping the big bull horn, at the southern extremity. Tedious indeed was the progress; the underbrush was so thick and entangled; the breath of the pervading vegetation was so dense; the insects were so numberless and voracious. Hour succeeded hour, and still they

advanced; and all along the line the same discouraging report was at intervals passed, "I have seen nothing, I have heard nothing, there is not the slightest trace of him." The sun had long since won its daily goal, and was now triumphantly returning to its home in the regal west. The shadows grew deeper upon the Mountain; the air became chill and nipping; vague sounds arose and fell from the thickets, like the sighing and wailing of a lost spirit; but nevertheless the stout young hearts struggled onward.

Upon the outer edge was Davis with eye and ear intent, seeking like an Indian scout for the faintest sign, the simplest murmur which might furnish a clew to good judgment. But the boy was becoming wearied and discouraged. The gloom of failure was settling upon him, and the stimulus of hope no longer inspired him. Had the other party gained the success for which he had so bravely striven? or, dreadful alternative, had the vile assassin escaped from their just vengeance? No, such iniquity could not go unpunished, the voice of George's blood would never be silent, nor could his poor shattered frame rest in peace, if he were not revenged! No intelligence, no signal had been received from the Tutor; he must now be far away upon the other side of the Mountain, and between them lay such vast wilds and fastnesses and secure retreats.

Davis halted for the moment and again listened. No weird uncanny voice now spake from the thicket; all was as calm as are Sahara's sands upon a windless day; save the crackle of the twigs beneath his companions' feet and the faint distant cries of crows. Ah, if like them he could only soar over the Mountain, and with the keenness of their bold eyes discover his lurking place! As he again advanced with augmenting despondency,

he found that despite his endeavors to examine every inch of the ground which he traversed, his attention was irresistibly attracted towards them. He noticed that the harsh discord of their cawing increased in volume ; and as he glanced into the sky he saw a long line of them rapidly flying eastward. As he slowly, and painfully, and only by means of a wide deviation, rounded a frowning abutment of the Mountain, that outjutted with the effrontery of a fortress and reared its rocky sides as proudly as does Gibraltar, he unexpectedly burst upon what seemed to be the concourse of an immense army of them. The air, the trees were black with them ; and their screaming was unearthly and deafening. Davis was bewildered. Never before, during any of his expeditions into the forest, had he encountered so great a multitude. What did it mean, what significance would true woodcraft assign to it? But as he looked towards the gaunt, naked tree, above which they were for the most part encircling and quarrelling, his blood congealed with fear and disgust, as though the icy finger of death had touched his arm and directed his gaze ; for there, slowly swinging from that same gallow's limb upon which had hanged the poor crazed rustic whose spectre had ever after haunted him, suspended by the rope which the gentle fingers of the despised Naomi had in part woven, grisly in the fate which he had courted and deservedly won, swayed in ghastly outline all that remained of Jonas Chidsy.

Quickly the startled boys passed the word along the line for Bannard to hasten to his leader. Tremendously the big bull horn, wound and impelled by dread, roared its bellow of awful import, scaring away the birds from their prey, and awakening into clamor all of the evil spirits that slumbered in the depths of the horrible

Mountain. But he who had fled before its voice no longer heeded it. The waves of terror had swept over him and overwhelmed him and swallowed him up forever. The boys gathered together and looked upon him ; but he no longer dreaded their gaze nor expected their taunts. The abrupt and broken tones of "O, O's" answering blast, were wafted by him ; but they stirred not his curiosity nor indignation. Wounded pride and envy and passion and consciousness of self had forever fled from the eternal vistas that had opened before him. The boys assembled and they departed. No one would touch him. Each eye shunned his hideousness, each mind apprehended its remembrance. Night descended upon the Mountain. The foul birds satiated with carrion sought their lofty eyries ; and the lightning shattered bough alone creaked a discordant requiem.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When Marcia aroused from her swoon, she awoke with trepidation ; for that great fear still possessed her. She started as if half expecting to be confronted by a sudden darkness. But she found that the world was unchanged. The sun was shining brightly ; within the lofty elms that shaded the house like gigantic canopies the birds were singing ; and through the open window she could observe a squirrel gayly flitting along the uppermost rail of the fence. Nature, her kindly nurse, reassured her. That ghastly form, whose grimness the crimsoned cloth had half concealed, half revealed, had been borne away ; and its rigidity no longer warned her to beware. Then, too, she was fondled and petted by all of the women ; and so many had assembled that in their presence she felt that she was safe. No one distrusted her fright ; nor placed any significance, except unreasoning terror, upon her outcry. They all praised her tenderness of heart, and her exceeding sympathy and compassion. She was too fragile to undergo such a shock ; she was too sensitive to endure the sight of blood ! So they escorted her to her aunt's house ; and after repeated recommendations of soothing draughts and perfect rest, they left her to enjoy that sense of comfort which rewards those who have bravely sustained a cruel and unmerited blow.

It was with difficulty, upon the next morning, that

she preserved an air of decorous solemnity after she had learned of the certain release which Jonas had afforded her ; but she did so. Her grief over the tragic fate of the two young men was sincere, though not poignant. She lamented the suddenness of their summons, and ventured the prayer that they had not been found without proper wedding garments.

When the week had sped away, and had become another signature in time's great volume, not even the remembrance of that vision of horror remained ; but absolute peace reigned within her heart. No one knew, no one even suspected or surmised the motive of the murder or of the suicide. In no way was she coupled with either of the dead, save as one who had been upon terms of pleasant and genial acquaintanceship with them, and who had been deeply yet naturally moved by the awfulness of their doom. It now seemed to her that the course of events had been almost providential. Her good fortune had hardly faltered in its allegiance ; and then it had amply atoned for its lukewarmness. Those who alone beside herself had held any part or knowledge in what she assured herself was an innocent little escapade, a peccadillo which the dust of oblivion would quickly cover, but which the uncharitable and wicked would have surely exaggerated and misconstrued, and have employed as a mighty lever with which to overthrow the shapely shrine which she had reared to her own purity, were now beyond the bounds of disclosure. She had been harassed and menaced by the one ; the place of the other, if she so desired, could without doubt be filled. She recollected that years before, when she was a little child, she had been greatly distressed over the loss of a pet terrier which had been her constant companion. But her father had procured an-

other one for her, whose faithful attachment speedily obliterated her grief.

After all, death provides its own consolation. It must be accepted ; for it brooks no contradiction. Therefore, why not yield to it with a good grace and prove the advantages that it makes manifest! George was young and giddy ; he might have become tiresome. He was vain and boastful; he might have become indiscreet. He was at times intemperate ; and liquor seeks strange confidants. He had indeed always pledged himself to secrecy ; but faith in his vows was now no longer necessary. Faith in its way was all very well ; but certainty was preferable. As for Jonas why should she mourn him ; a weak-minded driveller whom a little misfortune had changed into a demon. No sense of sorrow over his awful ending, nor shade of complicity in it affected her. She only regretted its swiftness and freedom from pain, and in the grave begrudged him any restfulness.

But she was becoming weary of Armway. She felt that in her sympathy towards her aunt, she had perhaps been unmindful of her dear father. She appreciated that her duty towards him was capable of no division, and that she must obey its pious voice. Besides Mrs. Clenton now realized Naomi's worth, since she missed its results ; and her demands were growing more and more exacting. And while she dared not to complain nor waver in her attentiveness, yet her high regard for herself perceived the benefits of a change of scene. Moreover her walks no longer afforded pleasure to her. There were so many disagreeable associations and they so aroused the recollection of occurrences which she had buried, and to which she denied the hope of resurrection. She believed that she had been hardly

used, and she condoled with herself as with an innocent victim of calamity. Of course she had made the best of the inevitable; but it was unjust that she should have been subjected to the necessity of so doing. She had brought with her to Armway a heart that was burning with love and sympathy towards mankind. She had endeavored in her simple way to benefit and encourage those with whom she had thus become connected. But her motives had strayed, and good intentions had produced evil deeds. Death, that grisly monster whose reality she had hitherto ignored, had haunted her footsteps; and fear had subjugated her reason.

So she bade her friends, and such were all whom she had there known, a tearful and tender adieu. Most happy would she be to continue to share their plain and godly life, with its unsurpassed advantages for reflection and soul-culture! Most thankful was she for the opportunity that had already been vouchsafed her! But her departure was necessary, for it was righteous. Her father, who depended so much upon her, her father, whom she feared was rapidly nearing the end of his pilgrimage; whose hair was growing so white, and whose steps now faltered beneath the burden of years; needed her. She knew it; she divined it from his letters, although he wrote it not. So she assured them all, and so she wished them farewell; leaving that most blessed inheritance, a good name, and a fragrant memory behind her.

It was the evening after she had sped homeward bound, followed by many a fervent benediction, that her aunt Mrs. Clenton sat in friendly conversation with several of her neighbors, who, good souls that they were, had visited her in the hope that they might mitigate her loneliness by their benevolent offices. They were gathered

about the hearth in the kitchen, and the cheery blaze tempered the chill of autumn, and obviated the sinful extravagance of a lighted lamp.

"Marshy's not hardy like," the widow remarked, as she straightened the scant folds of her gown as though pluming herself for oratorical flight, "And too delcutt for ordinary wear and tear like a chaney cup upon a dresser. But she's wuth her heft in gold at ministrations; and laws, how she do pray when the speret moves her."

"She's as purty as a real wax doll surely," rejoined she of the phenomenal tear-duct to whom the sad events of the recent past had imparted additional renown. "But, she seems to be onmindful of it. She's a model for all young gals, I say, and so I tell my darters fifty times a day."

The widow, notwithstanding her unanimity with this sentiment in which they all agreed and so signified by a hum of approval, had endured the interruption with impatience; for the tide of her loquacity was at full flood. So she continued with headlong haste: "She's the product of good, sober, industrious, God-fearing folk, which the Clentons allus was if I say it myself, which shouldn't. She's got conscience, she has, and that's all that one can trust in such fearsome days as these. Ah, well, lackaday, what changes time do bring! There's poor dear Naomee dead and gone, and her pretty white frocks that she nearly spent her fingers makin' last spring, not half wore out. There's that good Mr. Chidsy, who worked hisself to death if ever a mortal did, and went crazy through devotion and experiences! He kill George Dorne! I'll never believe it, not if fifty whipper-snapper tutors like that Blackburn said so. He never done it, you mark my words, he never done

it. He was that pious he wouldn't hurt a fly. They had orter number him among the saints and martyrs that they should, instead of hustling away his poor daft body to the town lot. It's ridiclous, a soft-spoken man like him that never flouted at his victuals. For why should he done it? He never had nothing to do with George or George with him. It's all them excitable helter-skelter boys that raised such a bobbery about it. He killed hisself, of course, and there's no denying of it, but he was clean daft when he done it, and that's all he done. The ways of Providence are past finding out; but figs don't thrive upon thistles. Think what a fine Christian speret allus moved him! Think how he preached that Sabbath day about Delily and her awful goings on! Sich men commit no murder; they save souls, they do. Mor'n likely some mill-hand from Simpington killed George: he was allus cutting didoes over there I heerd tell. I don't care nothin' about no crowners quest; I won't believe nothin' wrong of Mr. Chidsy, that's flat. There's that little Browning! Would any one pay attention to what he said? He made up a pack of lies, that he did. The trouble is, us women folk are too liberal with them boys; they're too well fed. It makes them frisky and rambunctious and too fond of the world. There's poor George, he's dead and gone; but I allus did say that he et too much!"

When Mrs. Clenton paused for lack of breath only, and not of words, Niobe took up the responsive strains and re-echoed her views and developed them into subtle particularities. For they expressed the opinions of all of the craft in Armway. Marcia had been young and beautiful; and therefore a proper subject for their envy. But she had escaped from the venom of their slander, as skilful charmers allure and fondle reptiles, by capti-

vating their senses. She had been unassuming and deferential; she had not flaunted herself boldly before them; but had ever been attentive to their wants, and profuse with oblations of unctuous flattery. So in many a household her character was extolled, and her virtues ripened and increased with the years, until they reached that perfection, which after death is attained by those fortunate beings who die in early youth.

And the grave in which Jonas had been laid by hasty and irreverent hands was not neglected nor dishonored by them. No, they wreathed it often with garlands; for flowers at Armway possessed no value, and could be had for the asking; and they planted a lusty weeping willow sprig near its head. Young maidens were taught to journey thither in pious pilgrimage upon the Sabbath, as to a Mecca where devout contemplations would necessarily arise, adduced by its holy influence. It mattered not that the church had refused him a Christian burial; that the law had adjudged him to be a deliberate murderer; that his name had been stricken from the roll of his class; and that his room had never again been occupied by a student; Jonas was nevertheless held to be guiltless of the sin of bloodshed by the adult females of Armway, and there, as in the hive, the queen always rules. That he had destroyed himself, they were forced to admit; and since this was so, they adroitly interposed the lamentable loss which his fervent zeal had occasioned, as a barrier to embarrassing questions concerning that other dread event which was so inscrutably connected with it. They recounted his rare oratorical powers, his mildness, his sensitiveness, his rapt ecstasy, his enshrouding reverie, the fervor of his words and the force of his example; they criticised the discipline of the Seminary and the severity of its curriculum, and they

declared that through the uncontrolled ardor of his devoutness, an innocent and transient delirium had deprived the world of another Whitfield. Thus, he, who in life had possessed no friend, save the silvery river and the twigs and brambles upon its banks which had striven to restrain him from his fate, found many in death. And as the years rolled by, the awfulness of his crime dwindled, and the piteousness of his untimely demise increased. For horror is short-lived, and sentimentalism like the Phœnix arises from its own ashes and in age becomes young and vigorous.

And Naomi slept securely upon the brow of the hill, for her rest was never disturbed. Her life had been so even, so unbroken by passion and transgression, that it was devoid of all interest to those of emotional dispositions, while eager-handed thrift refused a moment of repining to affection. Like that of a flower which blows and withers in the Catacombs, her sepulture was most tranquil. Yet the sward above her glistened with soft, tender hues; as if the earth recognized her and strove to provide a proper adornment. The sunlight seemed to linger there, as if the stout old God of day, who had witnessed so many iniquities, delighted to thus relieve and refresh his gaze. The snows of winter mantled it deeply; as if to warm and cherish the precious clay that in life had typified its purity and stainlessness; and rude Boreas restrained his ardor and swerved aside as he rushed by, and shook not its calm. Little birds in the spring time sang over her; and perhaps their melody expressed more sincerity and regard than would have the platitudes of which indifference had deprived her. But whether mourned by nature or utterly forsaken, she was happy. Her body alone had labored and grown weary. Her spirit had escaped the contamination of dross, and

wherever it was, remained as blithe and as guileless as that of a little child ; for like virgin gold it needed no refining.

And George — "He et too much." That was the essence of his condemnation, and it was irremissible. His graces had been for his fellows ; his faults had been for them. Death changed their animosity into forgetfulness. They would have none of him. Besides he was the flaw in their idol, which they had made unto themselves and worshipped. He recalled the possible suggestion that the Theologue could sin ; and no Papal bull ever maintained and reiterated the dogma of infallibility so strenuously as did they. They ignored him ; he became "that boy who was so mysteriously killed," the subject of casual mention, the object neither of pity nor of sorrow. The sod grew as green upon the campus as when his feet emulated the speed of Atalanta upon it ; and the dull reddish stain soon became verdant with even richer shades than ever before. So permanent was his memory among them. But many a gray head resting uneasily at night, buffeted by the troubles of the day and the threats of the morrow, has found balmy sleep in the careless echo of his laugh and jest. Many an old heart, that is old because it must be and not because youth and gayety and sunshine are distasteful, bounds with the exultant joys of years agone, as the remembrance of his bright bonny face, and stalwart form unwittingly recurs.

When Marcia returned to her native home, such great rejoicings prevailed as greet the Lady Bountiful who journeys from court to administer to the wants of the cottagers upon her estate. As the minister justly remarked to her father, she was popular because she de-

served to be, her nature was lovable, just as the rose is fragrant and the peach is luscious. Among those who welcomed her most effusively was a tall stalwart young man, dressed in the rough garb of labor, whose impatience was such that before the stage-coach had ceased to roll, he had jumped upon the hub of a wheel, and had thrust a great horny hand towards her through the window. It was with difficulty that in him she recognized Tom Graham her old comrade at school, with whom she had drunk so deeply from the Pierian spring; but she finally did so, though so doubtfully and so coldly, as it appeared to him, that he slunk away heavy with mortification. Yet it must have been the confusion which necessarily attended the occasion that unconsciously affected her manner; for as she assured her father during that evening she had scarcely appreciated what she was doing, she had been so overcome with happiness. He had related to her as an item of interest, that Tom Graham was upon the high road to fortune; that he had seized upon the little stream which had for so many years babbled in innocent play as it coursed through the village, and had transformed it into a mighty giant whose hands revolved immense wheels and vibrated numberless shuttles; and it was in response to his inquiry as to whether she had as yet seen him, that she had confessed her natural embarrassment.

Oh, surely his anxiety must have imagined indifference upon her part; for upon the very next morning when she encountered him so unexpectedly, it was the same old Marcia who accosted him, the Marcia with the winsome smile and tender steadfast eyes and the unconscious and bewildering pressure! How unfeignedly glad she was to see him; how the bygone days were brought into life through flattering reminiscences; how

the hope, which had struggled within him since the time when he had first met her within the woods, and they had formed that charming partnership of love and learning ; which had directed his loneliness and had nerved him with fortitude and persistency ; now expanded from a dim contingency into a glorious probability !

O golden days of courtship, how fleeting and transient are thy hours, weighted though they be with exceeding bliss ! How happy they were ; the aged renewed their youth by watching them ! For once the fond desires of parents and friends and gossips were realized, by the attraction and blending of these two pure hearts. For once the course of true love ran as smoothly as did the waters of Eden. How timidly the eyes were downward cast ; how trembled the little hand like the flutter of a lapwing ; as the robust burly man, hesitating like a school-boy attempting his first declamation, revealed the ardor and strength of his passionate attachment. But no coquetry enticed and perplexed him ; no frivolity mocked his earnestness. Trust and devotion spoke from those tender orbs that beamed upon him like twin beacons stationed without a haven of rest.

Merrily rang the village bells for the bridal, as merrily as they had chimed when the fair young bride, of twenty years before, had returned to her father's house. Brightly shone the sunlight as though it deemed it to be meet that everything should sparkle and glitter. Tearfully the young maidens bedecked the pathway of their favorite companion with flowers, symbolical in their purity. Solicitously did they caress her with mute expressions of encouragement. Ah, how the matrons cuddled her, and whispered among themselves the dread alarmings which she must not hear ! But through

the excitement and turmoil she remained as fair as imperturbed, and as serene as is the calla upon an Easter morning. She loved her husband, she believed in his love, and this perfect confidence cast out all fear.

And was she like the good little girl in the fairy tale forever afterwards happy? Who then can measure or define happiness or allot its endurance? Her husband lavished affection upon her; and the resources of his ever increasing wealth were always within her control. She did not yearn for children; and no children were born unto her. Her health was without a flaw. Her beauty was undimmed. Her nerves were as elastic as strands of Damascene steel. Her mind was not a passive sheet that displayed phantasmagoria without desire or intention; she controlled it because her body was so strong. Remorse would never attack her from within; only the assault of extraneous circumstances could ever storm and capture the citadel of her composure. She was physical, not spiritual; she was amenable to natural, not supernatural causes; and while nature smiled, her equanimity continued. So the years glided by, and the harmonious rise and fall of their fortunate days lulled her senses like the soft strains of dreamy music stealing from a vibrating harp.

Of course, old age like a little cloud upon the horizon would become greater and more dense. Of course, death might deprive her of all those who cared for her, and sudden disaster might change prosperity into ruin. Of course, fading comeliness might engender querulous discontent; and sickness, by racking the body, might shake and agitate the mind. Of course sleeplessness might then evoke spectres of forms long since forgotten; and from the darkness of the past might shine the face of a gentle, simple girl of true and touching innocence,

from whose eyes stream the tears of unmerited torment ; the face of a jolly, healthful boy radiant with mirth, yet across which creeps a dull, crimson mask of horrible significance ; the face of a demure, thoughtful, earnest young man, priggish and conceited and hypocritical yet harmless, which changes into distortion as the eyes flash, the lips tremble and the features twitch with uncontrollable passions. Of course, that fear of mortality which had wrung the cry of agony from her when she beheld the terrible work of the destroyer, might again overpower her when the grim monarch in reality approached. For it is said that cats which have dozed away years of comfort before the generous hearth, and have become so sleek and lazy that even the sight of cream fails to arouse them, sometimes, unexpectedly, without a reason that is tangible to human beings, will scream and go mad ; as though the land that lies within the air expanded before them, and the grisly shadows that people it were suddenly revealed. Such things are possible, and the happening of such contingencies could alone produce for her that retribution which so unequally visits the erring.

Yet Delilah was not drowned, nor driven into the wilderness, nor turned into a pillar of salt, nor cut into fragments, nor eaten by dogs! Poor hapless Samson loses his sight and takes his life ; but she receives the pieces of silver, and straightway departs to enjoy them!

What then is the conclusion of this matter? Nothing ; that unanswerable answer to all perplexing problems. History informs ; it does not elucidate. It proffers facts ; it makes no deductions. There has been a view of a scene displayed. What is its purpose? Has a landscape purpose? Has a field with shadowy trees, and

foaming brook, and cheerful daisies, and streaming sunlight, and lambs at play, and the brow of a thundercloud jutting above the horizon, a design and a lesson which it conveys? Possibly ; but seek it ye who will. Hold the picture in different lights, stretch the neck and strain the eye in eager scrutiny, and the result is variance and contradiction. For life ever presents the two-faced shield, and one side is golden and the other is crystal with silver ; and from our approach we obtain our conviction which we know to be infallible, and so does he believe who advances towards us, though he thinks to the contrary. Facts are facts, when we change them into symbols they become vagaries. So let the simple narrative be a simple narrative and nothing more. Let its characters remain personalities and not be contorted into texts. For the world is weary of preaching and of speculation. The philosophic mind has spent itself, and the answer to all of its queries and questionings is the unanswerable answer of negation. George did thus, and so did Marcia, and Naomi, and Jonas ; because they were George, and Marcia, and Naomi, and Jonas. So let it remain, without other reason for their existence, than that they did exist. So let it remain, as remain the smiling meadows, the limpid river, the green expanse of the campus, and the direful obscurity of the sombre old Mountain ; as remain in tranquillity the encircling hills of Armway.

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